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One, two, Freddy's born again.

Robert Englund passes the gloves to Jackie Earle Haley for the remake of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Both actors help us detect the iconic boogymen. PLUS: Interviews with the remake's director Sam Bayec, Heather Langenkamp and the makers of a new documentary on the original series, and the weirdest Freddy merchandise ever made.

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By APRIL SNELLINGS

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By JONATHAN BARNES



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*Flesh for Fiends*

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# NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND

**T**affos, rogue taxonomy, surgical abominations and a gruesome bum victim – this issue of *Rue Morgue* is brought to you by the letters R and M and by the organ *Skin*. Headlining our unintentional epidemics theme, of course, is the last entry on that list, Freddy Krueger. I never watched an *Elm Street* movie as a kid, but I definitely knew who Freddy was, it was impossible not to, as he was seemingly everywhere in the late '80s: TV, games, comic books, T-shirts, teens dressed up as him at Halloween and hung pictures of him in their lockers. In the US, he did MTV specials, and there was a toll-free line where you could hear him tell you a scary story (with parental permission). The guy was even on lunch boxes. Lunch boxes! Can you think of anything more subversive than parents packing their children's lunches in a container featuring a burn-scarred, pedophile child killer from a gory R-rated movie? That's about as appropriate as a Norman Bates Mother's Day card, or Jeff Dahmer breakfast cereal.



Krueger is the king of modern-day boogymen for a lot of reasons – many of which are discussed by Freddy players Robert Englund and Jackie Earle Haley in our cover story – but the aspect of his world that I most connect with is the setting. I grew up in suburbs reminiscent of the manicured yards and neat houses on *Elm Street*. We knew our neighbours, the kids hung out together and the road was quiet enough for street hockey. By all accounts it was an idyllic community, a short commute away from the city, a bike ride away from the woods and farmland that bordered it, and seemingly a world away from trouble. Even the sidewalks were friendly, gently sloping so you could easily ride your BMX bike over 'em.

When I got older, I began to notice cracks in the veneer. The couple across the street got divorced, another neighbour gambled away her family's savings, and in the evenings the lights at the local Dairy Queen were dimmed so it could host Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. That suburban image was a lie.

With *Elm Street*, Wes Craven was very consciously throwing blood all over this whitewash. Granted, several years earlier John Carpenter had made the suburbs a frightening place in *Halloween*, but the locus of horror in *Elm Street* is the burbs themselves, with Freddy as this hideous representation of what's really rattling the pipes in the basement. In fact, I find the absurdly rusty-looking furnace in Nancy's house more unnerving than those claws. The Kids Aren't Alright is the theme of the series, as the boogeyman appears against a backdrop of parental neglect and alcoholism, vigilantism, drug use, mental illness, teen suicide and repressed homosexuality (the gay subplot of part two is almost comically overstated). Time and time again, the parents and voices of authority in the films tell these kids that it's all in their heads, that it'll all be better after a good night's sleep. I doubt it was lost on Craven that suburbs are also known as "bedroom communities" (because the inhabitants work in the city during the day and return there at night to sleep).

And bedroom communities are very much characterized by that separation. Often there's a greenbelt – a swath of farmland, fields with power lines or wooded areas – separating the city proper from the outlying communities. It keeps the middle and upper middle classes away from the inner city and creates order, as there are rules regarding how you can landscape your yard, the colours you're permitted to paint your house, the placement of your fence on the property line, etc. Don't want to bring your neighbours' resale values down, after all.

If you're trying to raise a family, this orderly compartmentalized place represents safety and status quo, if you're a teenager with no car, it means isolation and boredom. When I see those cartoon-copy clusters of houses that continue to pop up along the highway, I think of prison colonies (Craven said it all with the bars on Nancy's windows). No wonder these places scream for chaos.

Enter Freddy Krueger, a being that defies boundaries, who's both human and monster, man and metal, corporeal and incorporeal – hell, the guy is anarchy on a cellular level, right down to his melted skin. He's a "fuck you" to order, a "fuck you" to the burbs – the appeal of which still stands today, on the eve of the remake's release. You can park your SUV in the garage, order takeout and watch HBO on your mega-flat-screen, but when you fall asleep, your subconscious unleashes the boogeyman, despite your best waking efforts to keep out the disorder that he embodies. For me, that's why Freddy's the boogeyman for our times. He knows that, secretly, we love the idea of slicing the supple skin right off that reality.

*Dave Alex*  
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**RUE MORGUE #90** would not have been possible without the valuable assistance of *Cities* Stanley Mary Beth Helyar, A. McNulty and the workshop.

**RUE MORGUE #90** was almost made impossible by useless cabbages.

## COVER FREDDY VS. FREDDY

Illustration by Gary Pullin and Justin Erickson  
Designed by Justin Erickson

## Canada

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# POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



**MY NAME IS SERGIO MOLINA** and I'm Paul Naschy's son. I've known for years about your wonderful magazine and want to thank you for the coverage you did on my father. He knew very well about Rue Morgue and I remember an interview you did with him for *Rogé Sangre* some years ago (RM#48). Thank you so much for your support. Keep in touch!

**SERGIO MOLINA — MADRID, SPAIN**

**I HATE TO SAY** that even though February only has 28 days, it is the longest month of the year for me, having to wait for a new issue of *Rue Morgue*. From January 4 to March 4 is a long time. (I usually am done reading it cover to cover in a day or two.) I was beyond happy to finally receive the March issue in my mailbox today, and I was ecstatic to see your spread on metal legend King Diamond. Finally the reigning King of Darkness gets his due. Thanks *Rue Morgue*! I am even more thankful that February is finally over and I do not have to go another 60 days without this beloved magazine!

**A. WHEAT — PHOENIX, ARIZONA**

**THIS YEAR, THE ACADEMY AWARDS** thought that a tribute to the horror genre was applicable. Many of us who appreciate the darker genre stuff probably aren't Oscar followers, but it's not often the high and mighty Academy loses respect or credit our way, so it was a "take what you can get" moment. What we got was a fairly apathetic mess. After an introduction by two of the *Twilight* pretty-faces — hardly a move that would start the tribute with any real horror cred — the viewer was treated to a montage of video clips that was head-scratchingly ignorant in a number of ways. Why was there a scene from the hideous *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Next Generation*, but a split-second shot from the real deal got tucked away at the end? How can an industry making so many millions of dollars with zombies justify inclusion of a blink-and-you-miss-it clip from *Night of the Living Dead*, while Johnny Depp appears no less than three times? How is it possible that *Alien* — which Dan O'Bannon wrote — could get a clip, yet O'Bannon himself was overlooked in the tribute to those in the industry who'd passed away? The segment did have its moments — the opening *Jaws* scene, for example — but in the end, it felt shockingly put together by someone looking for pretty, popular faces and blockbuster hits rather than what genre fans would have appreciated the most. To use a worn-out phrase, it tried to play the notes but didn't comprehend the music. After seeing this, do we really need to wonder why Hollywood can't turn out a decent horror film anymore?

**JEREMY WEBSTER — INMAN, KANSAS**

**I CAN'T TELL YOU** how honoured I am that all of you at *Rue Morgue* selected my music to *Drag Me To Hell* as your favourite score for 2009. I know that I adore your magazine and I, like so many others, have such high regards for *Rue Morgue*. I can't think of a better organization to be honoured by than your (perhaps excluding the Oscars)!

**CHRISTOPHER YOUNG  
— LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

**I ONLY BECAME AWARE** of your magazine in 2006, and this is the first time I've written to *Rue Morgue*. Shame on me. Just wanted to say thanks for publishing a horror magazine that is so devoted to the genre. Also, thank you for having *Daybreakers* movie coverage in RM#97. I couldn't remember the last time I enjoyed a vampire film so much. Hopefully it was successful enough for a sequel, because I want one! All of the main cast should return, if just for one sequel! The Sam Neill interview was also fun to read.

**MARY VOYSTRUKOV — CINCINNATI, OHIO**

**TO ALL OF YOU WHO** write in and make sure that you let the writers at *Rue Morgue* know how much they suck, fuck off and find something else to do. While I am all about free speech, if I were you, *Rue Morgue*, I wouldn't publish that shit. I appreciate that you take criticism well, but filling your Post Mortem comment page with a bunch of no-life-having idiots that just want to trash you, while that doesn't change my mind, it may change someone else's. Yes, I agree, some of the shit you publish sucks, but you always make up for it and I refuse to stop being an avid collector because of one or two bad issues. I was extremely impressed with RM#96 (*Ridiculous*) and I hope to see more like it. I have taken your word on a lot of films and for the most part have agreed. And yes, while Bowen is an asshole, it's his column and he can say whatever he wants! Get over it, you *Twilight*-loving freaks! I am up and ready for anyone who wants to take me on! Thanks *Rue Morgue*, you never disappoint me.

**KELLY PAQUETTE — CINCINNATI, OHIO**

**LONG-TIME HORROR FAN**, but honestly I've never taken the chance to take a read through your magazine. Recently, I spotted one of your issues that I just couldn't turn down, a super-spoiled issue celebrating the life of one of the world's greatest writers, Mr. Poe. Let me tell you I was impressed with just the sheer amount of content, reminding me why I love horror magazines. Also, a great, informative article on *Night of the Creeps*, which is completely unheard of amongst the horror community in my hometown. Hell, even the article completely focused on *ONAR* was solid, and hilarious. But the real crowning

achievement of RM#94 is the Poe madness. I feel like I'll be finding new Poe info in this issue every time I pick it up for the rest of my life. Of particular interest was the Posi-ography, and the article regarding Stuart Gordon's one-man show. Basically, I'm very impressed and if you keep up this level of quality, I'll keep buying.

**MITCHELL MACEACHEIN — AGGRESS WITHHELO**



**GARY, THANKS FOR MAKING** such great art! The American *Werewolf in London* cover of RM#93 was really amazing. I love that movie and I just knew at once that I had to get that t-shirt. It was done by Jimmy at Hellspaw in Oslo, Norway. I'm also planning some more ink based on your work in the future, hope you don't mind — especially *The Thing* cover from RM#72. I believe that would be a great companion piece to the *AWOL* on my arm.

**JON VASSBØ — OSLO, NORWAY**

**CORRECTION** The *Creature with the Atom Brain* CD reviewed in RM#98 was actually released by The End Records.

WE ENCOURAGE READERS TO SEND THEIR COMMENTS VIA MAIL, OR EMAIL. LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR LENGTH AND/OR CONTENT. PLEASE SEND TO: [info@rue-morgue.com](mailto:info@rue-morgue.com) OR:

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# Headlines

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

## FORGERIES ON THE RISE IN VINTAGE HORROR MOVIE POSTER MARKET

If you've decided to dive into the high-end market for vintage monster movie posters, beware: that creature feature one-sheet you just laid down thousands for may be a doppelgänger. Recently, the New York office of the FBI opened an investigation into the production and sale of fake movie posters. It seems increasingly crooks are taking advantage of restoration companies to create knock-offs of posters and lobby cards that only experts can tell from the real thing.

"Horror movie posters have always enjoyed a special place in the hearts of movie poster collectors," says Diane Jeffrey, president and CEO of Vista, California poster restoration company Studio Conservation Inc. "[Universal's posters] still remain the holy grail of poster collecting."

Jeffrey herself landed at the centre of a major controversy last May. A new client asked her to restore a print of a rare one-sheet for the 1931 Tod Browning classic *Dracula*. Among other things, she restored some printing on the bottom of the poster that had been ripped away. When she saw the same poster (valued at a minimum of \$200,000) turn up on a catalogue cover for auction house Profiles in History in October, she contacted John Davis, who'd authenticated it, and he assured her it was the real deal.

But several days before the auction, the poster collecting community had pooled its analysis of the poster in various online forums. And after Jeffrey shared her concerns on the movie poster collector mailing list MoPo (filmfan.com), the poster was withdrawn from auction.

The alleged perpetrator of the *Dracula* poster fraud is a collector of Universal horror movie posters, says Rach Halegua, a 40-year veteran of the trade who runs movieposterbad.com and helped to expose the *Dracula* forgery.

"The scam was that he needed other Universal horror posters to trade to other collectors so he could get the posters he wanted," Halegua explains.

Halegua brought his concerns to S2 Art Group Ltd., which sells a one-sheet reproduction of the 41-by-27-inch *Dracula* poster for \$325 USD. He discovered that their artwork is licensed from the American Film Institute then "cleared up" by S2 artists to create more attractive prints, and to prevent them from being sold as the genuine article, only two of which are known to exist. It was determined by collectors that the S2 poster image, produced on vintage presses, was used for the auction fake.

Jason DeBord, who runs original-people.com. He says that the internet has made it "much easier for collectors to network with one another, share information...and generally look out for each other."

"Unfortunately," he adds, "unscrupulous people have also learned to use the internet as a tool to defraud many, many people."

The poster collecting community has been reeling from several lawsuits. Last December, Movietime, Inc. and Jersey Productions Inc. brought suit in New Jersey against Tiffany Haggard for allegedly selling the companies \$160,000 worth of fraudulent posters, including one for *Werewolf of London* (1935). Tiffany's husband, Kerry T. Haggard of Commerce, Georgia was already being sued by Ronald Magid of Los Angeles for trading nine allegedly fake posters and lobby cards for twenty legitimate ones valued at \$150,000, according to the *Maene Antique Digest*. These include items from *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Wolf Man* (1941). Another suit against Haggard filed in Michigan in August by collector James A. Gresham put that plaintiff's losses from approximately 30 alleged forgeries at nearly \$900,000, including



A restored reproduction of the original *Dracula* poster

items from *The Raven* (1935) and *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). Cases are still in the courts.

The use of restoration companies to create knock-offs is increasing, Jeffrey says, in part because "dealers, auction houses and even museums have become more tolerant of copies or fakes, often not admitting to their handling of them."

Halegua is a bit more philosophical. "A good piece of art is still a good piece of art. But a good forgery is a fantastic piece of art as it clearly fools the experts."

A.S. BERMAN



# THE 2010 EUROPEAN FILM MARKET OFFERS SNEAK PEEK AT INTERNATIONAL GENRE TITLES

Each February the European Film Market (EFM) descends upon Berlin, and this year genre films were front and centre, making it an excellent indicator of the year to come in horror. To put the event in context, it's one of four annual powerhouse industry showcases, along with Hong Kong Filmmart (in March), the Cannes Marche Du Film (in May) and the American Film Market (in November), where projects big and small are developed, exhibited, acquired and sold. The 2010 EFM ran from February 11 to 21, during the 60th anniversary edition of the Berlinale (a.k.a. Berlin Film Festival). It was host to more than 1000 market screenings and welcomed over 6450 industry professionals from a whopping 81 nations.

This year's EFM horror highlights included Daniel (A Necessary Death) Stamm's Eli Roth-produced "reality horror" film *The Last Exorcism*, about a possessed child and the troubled priest who attempts to rid her of evil. Screening under its original title *Conan*, it was snapped up within hours of its premiere, by several international distributors, including Lionsgate, who planned to premiere it for North Americans at SXSW in Austin, Texas in March. Christopher Smith's latest outing *Black Death* also debuted to a packed cinema of buyers, and as impressive as his earlier efforts *Severance*, *Creep* and *Triangle* may be, viewers were surprised by what the filmmaker accomplished with his fourth feature. This tense gothic chiller, set in witch-burning times during an outbreak of the bubonic plague, was for many the strongest horror film screened at this year's market.

MPI's Dark Sky Films picked up the North American rights to *The Last Lovecraft*, *The Relic of Chululu*, which was a huge hit at the Slamdance Film Festival in Park City, Utah this past January. The horror-comedy, directed by newcomer Henry Saine, sees the last surviving descendant of the Dark Prince of Providence tasked with keeping an ancient relic out of the hands of those who would use it to release Chululu



Christopher Smith's *Black Death*, and (below) Daniel Stamm's *The Last Exorcism*

into the world. The company also wowed attendees with footage from Jim Mickle's forthcoming vampire film *Stake Land* (RAM97), which reunites the *Midnight Movie* director with star Nick Damici, and was co-produced by filmmaker Larry Fessenden. (Fessenden, though not in attendance, was also represented at EFM with screenings of his just-completed *Bitter Feast*, about a disgruntled TV chef who kidnaps the food critic that tanked his career.)

Meanwhile, Magnolia Pictures fell in love with Neil (The Descent) Marshall's ultra-violent action epic *Centurion* – a film set in AD 117 that pits an invading Roman Legion against a savage tribe known as the Piets. After picking up the film, Magnolia divulged its plans to premiere it at South Carolina's brand new ActionFest (touted as "the film festival with a body count") on April 15, before releasing it to North American cinemas this summer.

As well, Japanese distributor Nikkatsu's new extreme gore division, Sushi Typhoon, announced that controversial filmmaker Sion

Sono (*Suicide Club*) is currently in post-production on a serial killer thriller titled *Cold Fish*. The company also impressed lovers of the unusual by unveiling preliminary art for the omnibus feature *Mutant Girls Squad*, which promises to be another completely over-the-top cinematic experience, and was co-directed by Yoshihiro Nishimura (*Tokyo Gore Police*), Noboru Iguchi (*Machete Girl*) and neotor/stuntman/filmmaker Tak Sakaguchi (*Be a Man! Samurai School*).

Not surprisingly, 3-D made waves across the market, with numerous landmark entries screening for buyers. Among them *The Grudge* director Takashi Shimizu's *Shock Labyrinth*, *Extreme 3D* and Yuen Woo Ping's *True Legend*, which are, respectively, the first modern J-horror and Hong Kong martial arts films to embrace the format. *Isolation* helmer Billy O'Brien was also on hand to present *Creeping Zero*, an atmospheric 3-D sci-fi short made to hook investors for a feature-length version.

Judging by the sheer volume of genre fare at this year's EFM, as well as the strength and variety of the horror offerings, 2010 is shaping up to be a banner year for fright fans.

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# ROADKILL



youtube.com/watch?v=IwreGOW4wng0  
Watch Freddy Krueger pump snack food in this clever four-year-old Italian commercial that was allegedly banned for being "too scary for children." And, if you've ever wondered how Freddy (not played here by Robert Englund) eats, well, it answers that question, too – hilariously.

## supernaturalfiction.co.uk

R.B. Russell's ever-expanding Guide to Supernatural Fiction offers bios and bibliographies for more than 360 genre authors and editors. While the website seems to somewhat favour classic horror scribes of yesteryear, there is an undeniable wealth of information collected here. Recommended for bibliophiles and more casual fans alike.

## igloo@theuncanny.blogspot.com

Horror movie blogs are a dime a dozen these days, but the Igloo Keeper serves up a novel premise: he's trapped in an igloo, surrounded by a forcefield, with only an old TV to keep him company. Hence, he writes about the genre films he views while in "confinement," providing a fun change of pace from the usual movie blog fare.

## holocaustjessicafordworth.net

This exhaustive fan site for 1971's *Let's Scare Jessica to Death* is stacked to the rafters with info, photos and links to reviews and articles about the film. In addition, there are viewer testimonials, downloadable sound bites, production trivia and even several interactive elements (such as polls and quizzes). Leave your insanity at the keyboard.

## holer626.com

Purportedly created to promote Doritos products (but we're not sure how), *Holer 626* is an award-winning, free, immersive online game in which players find themselves trapped in a haunted hotel. To escape, one must traverse ten different levels, while solving a variety of puzzles. The catch? It can only be played between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. – the sneaking hour, we presume.

Compiled by MONICA S. KUEHLER

Got a Roadkill suggestion? Email a link to roadkill@time-magazine.com

# MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY PLANNED FOR MONTREAL

Teenagers are inexorably drawn to horror films, even if they're dipping into a heady cauldron of subtext, symbolism and all-around modern myth-making that they aren't quite equipped to process yet. The Miskatonic Institute of Horror Studies, a new series of workshops and master classes aimed at teenagers, wants to acknowledge that attraction, and strives to give young horror fans the tools they need to develop a more sophisticated appreciation of the genre.

Named after H.P. Lovecraft's fictional university, Miskatonic is the brainchild of writer, film programmer and *Rue Morgue* contributor Ker-La Janisse. The idea was born when she was asked to teach a similar genre-focused course in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Janisse quickly realized there was a two-fold need for workshops aimed at young horror fans.

"One thing is sharing something with a younger generation so [kids] can grow up to write about these films, and make them," she says. "But there's also the fact that the genre is so maligned by a lot of people, especially parents. A lot of parents don't want their kids watching these films, yet teenagers are a large portion of the [horror] audience. What ends up happening is, you have teenagers who sneak off and watch these movies with their friends, and they're not necessarily the most critical viewers. They're picking up on the superficial elements of the story, but not the subtext that is pretty much always there in horror films."

Miskatonic's initial classes – including "Introduction to Horror Film Criticism for Teens" – were held at Winnipeg's Aqua Books, where Janisse is currently a writer-in-residence. While Miskatonic will hopefully have its own venue in Montreal by the end of 2010, Janisse sees plenty of opportunities for travelling and internet-based courses.

"I know so many people [in Montreal] who are 'horror' people – programmers for Fantasia, teachers at Concordia [University] who don't normally get to teach genre studies – and I was planning on opening some kind of venue for screenings anyway, so I figured it could also operate as the home base for this institution. But it could also be web-based so that people across Canada can offer courses in their own cities under the banner of the Institute."

The curriculum is enough to inspire fits of jealousy in practically any savvy horror fan, regardless of age. Who wouldn't want to take



**Masters in Horror:** Ker-La Janisse cuts ribbon on Miskatonic University

classes such as "The House of Hammer" and "Horror and the Advent of Pop-Psychology." And while the courses might be fun, they're far from whimsical. For instance, a sixteen-year-old student can take course #204, "The Italian Giallo Film," but not until completing its prerequisite course: "Masochism in the Movies."

Janisse, who also founded the CineMuerde Horror Film Festival (which ran in Vancouver from 1999 to 2005), plans to bring a number of horror professionals on board to teach Miskatonic's courses. Some are already confirmed – Caedon Vatsdal, author of *They Came from Within: A History of Canadian Horror Cinema*, will head up a course about the history of Canadian horror movies, and Ryan Bruce Levey, a sales agent with Toronto's Vagranity Films Releasing, is developing a course on gay subtext in horror cinema – while others will be recruited in connection with major events, such as the Fantasia International Film Festival and Montreal World Film Fest.

"Teenagers are watching horror movies anyway, whether you like it or not," Janisse muses. "They're at that age where they can go one way or the other, in terms of how they deal with violent imagery, so it's important for kids to be able to watch it and talk about it. Trying to shield them from it doesn't work; they're going to find ways to watch it anyway."

Updates on Miskatonic University can be found at big-smash.com.

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## THE RUE MORGUE SICK TOP SIX



### TELEVISION TRAUMA

1. **A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3: DREAM WARRIORS**  
JENNIFER WATCHES THE KRUEG' TUBE
2. **HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER**  
HENRY MAKES A HAT FOR THE FAT MAN
3. **RINGU**  
SADAKO COMES CRAWLING
4. **HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH**  
KILLER COMMERCIAL BREAK
5. **VIDEOOROME**  
(SUR)REALITY TV
6. **POLTERGEIST**  
CAROL ANNE'S SUPERNATURAL SET

1. A California woman was recently found guilty of murder, after stabbing a fortune teller and her daughter repeatedly in their faces for failing to provide her with an effective love spell.

2. The title of Robert Rodriguez's 1996 film *From Dusk Till Dawn* was inspired by signage often posted at drive-ins, which stated that the night's entertainment ran "from dusk till dawn."

3. A Staten Island woman stands accused of selling her dead eight-year-old child's identification for \$10,000.

4. The \$8 million Broadway musical adaptation of Stephen King's *Carrie* debuted in 1988 and promptly closed after just five shows, making it one of the biggest failures in Broadway history.

5. Police investigating the death of a female patient following an abortion procedure uncovered no less than two dozen fetuses tucked away in a freezer in the physician's office. Apparently some had been there as long as 30 years.

6. In order to authentically play the role as the sightless Sayer of the Law in the 1936 remake of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Ron Perlman wore lenses that would actually blind him.

7. This past February, a female spectator at the NHRA Arizona Nationals car race was killed after being struck by a tire that became detached and airborne during a fiery crash.

8. The Freddy glove used in *A Nightmare on Elm Street Part 2: Freddy's Revenge* (1985) also appeared in *Evil Dead II* (1987) before vanishing from the set of *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: The Dream Warriors* later that same year. It was never recovered.

9. A new extortion scam in Hong Kong sees a Taoist priest telling random mall shoppers that they have been possessed by a deadly, evil spirit, and then forcing an exorcism upon said shopper, which they are later expected to pay for in full.

10. The 1941 version of *The Wolf Man* was slated to feature a scene in which the titular lycanthrope battled a bear, however the bear ran off during the shoot and the scene was subsequently excised. The footage shot before the escape was later used in the theatrical trailer.

11. When Geigle launched the *Street View* strips of Windsor, Ontario earlier this year, some users discovered a rather shocking captured image: the bloodstained remnants of a murder scene.

12. An uncredited Ivan Reitman voiced the characters of Zuul and Slimier in *Ghostbusters* and *Ghostbusters II*.

13. During his recent trial, a Chinese student would be studying at Jilin Agricultural University confessed to stabbing his roommate to death because of his perpetual snoring.



Compiled by MONICA S. KUEBLER

Got a weird stat or morbid fact? Send it through to [info@rue-morgue.com](mailto:info@rue-morgue.com)

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Fan of *Metalsmith*? Front town sadly bereft of satanic cherubs passing blood? Forty grand burning a hole in your pocket? Then what you need is a genuine marble replica Dethklok fountain (artist rendition pictured above), 66 inches high with a 56-inch base. "Conversation piece" doesn't even begin to cover it. Put the mermaid in "ornamental" at [adultswimshep.com](http://adultswimshep.com)

## 3 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES JOURNAL AND POSTCARDS

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## 4 RED-EYED ZOMBIE SLEEP MASK

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ONE, TWO, FREDDY'S BORN ANEW...  
**ROBERT ENGLUND** PASSES THE GLOVE TO  
**JACKIE EARLE HALEY** FOR THE REMAKE OF  
*A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*. BOTH ACTORS  
HELP US DISSECT THE ICONIC BOOGEYMAN.



# FREDDY

BY AARON VON LUPTON

*Freddy is vicious, but he has a sense of humor. He has a humanity to him. ... In Western slang, you have a guy in a white hat and a guy in a black hat, one's the good guy, the other's the bad guy. We have to be aware that within the parent hero is the potential to be a real villain and within any villain there is the capacity for, or even elements of, humor, tenderness, vulnerability and love.* — WES CRAVEN, IN AN INTERVIEW FROM THE BOOK, *SCREAMS AND NIGHTMARES*

**I**T'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT ANYONE COULD APPLY SUCH DEEP THINKING TO FREDDY KRUEGER, the pop culture icon that today is recognized as one of mainstream horror's goofiest characters. However, there was actually a time when Freddy was a force to be reckoned with — a dark and violent fiend who fueled Wes Craven's 1984 suburban horror classic *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

By the time the film hit theatres, Jason Voorhees, Leatherface and Michael Myers had done some serious slicing and dicing at the box office. But the formula of these films was simple: Gather a group of no-name teen actors, let a masked, voiceless brute knock 'em down one by one and — *boom!* — money in the bank.

Freddy, on the other hand, was a new kind of relentless stalker. Distinguished by his charmed flesh, weathered fedora, green-and-red striped sweater and trademark weapon — an old gardening glove equipped with five finger blades — he was not just some unstoppable slashing machine. Rather, in modern fairy tale fashion, Freddy was a child murderer offered by vigilante parents and reborn as a supernatural entity that preyed on his killers' offspring by entering their dreams, leading to limitless rubber reality possibilities. One of the parental characters who burned Freddy alive in his previous existence described him as a "filthy child murderer," but fans knew he was something even sicker than that. (Indeed, the movie's original script had Freddy as a pedophile, before that was changed to avoid similarities with a sensational case in the papers at the time.) Recalling



his gritty rape-revenge feature debut *Last House on the Left*, Craven named the character after Krug, the loathsome rapist-murderer portrayed by David Hess.

The man who donned the glove, of course, was Robert Englund. Before *Elm Street*, he had small parts in genre titles such as *Galaxy of Terror*, *Dead and Dined* and Tobe Hooper's *Eaten Alive*, but was best known as Willie, the friendly alien in the hit sci-fi miniseries *V*—a stark contrast to the menacing Freddy. In his now-famous casting meeting with Craven, Englund showed up with dark circles pencilled under his eyes and his hair greased back, then proceeded to engage in a weird staring game with the director. The rest is horror history.

A *Nightmare on Elm Street* was a hit, earning over \$25 million on a \$1.8 million budget. Freddy became an instant horror icon, and producer Robert Shaye immediately started a franchise. (Craven decided to move on.) Shaye broadened Freddy's audience by fusing more humour into the character and taking advantage of the fact that, unlike his contemporaries, Krueger talked and wasn't hidden behind a mask. Very quickly, the character transitioned from the sadistic boogeyman of the series' first installment, where he was known as "Fred Krueger," to the wisecracking, vaudevillean joker Freddy, whose image was licensed for everything from lunch boxes to calling cards.

Go figure, as the series became more successful (in a 1988 horror title fight, *ANiES 4: The Dream Master* destroyed *Friday the 13th Part VII* at the box office, the films earning \$43 mil-



# S. FREDDY

INTERVIEW BY AARON VON LUPTON  
AND DAVE ALEXANDER

lion and \$19 million, respectively), the movies just got sillier. Freddy was already more clown than killer by the time *The Dream Master* rolled around, and when New Line Cinema finally decided to temporarily end the series three years later with *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare*, the character was reduced to pop culture references and parodies, including one where he plays with a version of the Nintendo Power Glove. In 1994, Craven returned to the series with *New Nightmare*, a meta, post-modern take on the franchise that was brilliant in concept but less successful in execution. It was followed in 2003 by the predictably cornball *Freddy vs. Jason*. Suffice it to say, it's been a long time since Freddy Krueger was a real nightmare figure.

Now, on April 30th, 26 years after the character first appeared onscreen, music video director Sam Bayer (p.19) will introduce Freddy Krueger to a new generation of terror fans, with former child actor Jackie Earle Haley wearing the glove. Haley—who co-starred in the *Bad News Bears* franchise in the '70s, was Oscar-nominated for his portrayal of a pedophile in the 2006 drama *Little Children* and is best known as Rorschach in last year's *The Watchmen*—dons terrifying new bum makeup as Warner Brothers tries to bring Freddy back to the boiler room of our nightmares.

At the same time, Englund, who's busier than ever making television appearances, co-starring in a slew of upcoming genre movies and promoting his recent autobiography, *Hollywood Monster*, joins cast and crew from the original series in the upcoming documentary *Never Sleep Again: The Elm Street Legacy* (see p.21).

Via phone interviews, *Rue Morgue* asked the two Freddies to trade views on *Elm Street*'s darkest denizen.





**FREDDY HIMSELF IS ONE OF THE FIRST HORROR CHARACTERS WITH A REAL DISTINCT PERSONALITY, AND HE LOVES HIS WORK, AS I'VE ALWAYS SAID. ROBERT ENGLUND**

**I'M PLAYING A MYTHICAL, SUPERNATURAL BOOGEYMAN. ONCE I REALLY STARTED TO EMBRACE THAT, I FOUND A LOT OF THE ANSWERS IN THE FIRST MOVIE... JACKIE EARLE HALEY**

*Jackie, how did you become the new Krueger on the block?*

**JACKIE EARLE HALEY:** I first heard about it when people on the internet started suggesting me for the role. Then I met with Sam Bayer, [producer] Brad Fuller and [producer] Andrew Form, and a few weeks after they offered me the part and we started to get to work on it. I never even auditioned, we just had drinks.

*How familiar were you with Freddy before this?*

**JEH:** Not super familiar. I haven't sat through all of the films. Of course, I think the whole world is familiar with Freddy Krueger.

*Robert, how does it feel to pass on the glove?*

**ROBERT ENGLUND:** I'm really honoured to be handing over the baton to Jackie — his work in *Little Children*, I thought he was the best part of *The Matchmen*, he's got a role in *Shutter Island*, he's the real thing. Jackie's a wonderful, talented character actor and a real interesting choice here.

*So you're happy to finally move away from Elm Street?*

**RE:** I'm getting old now, you guys. Even if they were doing *Freddy Vs. Michael Myers*, I don't know if I could suck it up anymore. It's hard for me to do stunts — I can do them once or twice and that's about it. I may be too old to play him. And I understand rebooting the franchise. Whatever your opinions are of the remake of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or the remake of *The Hills Have Eyes*, *The Last House on the Left*, *Friday the 13th*, *The Crazies*, the *Dead Films*, they're remaking everything. I'm not the actor to get on the pulpit against remakes because I was in the remake of *A Star Is Born*. It's like the casting couch; remakes come with the territory.

*How do you feel about the way Krueger has evolved over the years?*

**RE:** Well, we make mistakes. By the time we got to part six, as I say in my book, I think

we jumped the shark a bit. But we did that intentionally. We really thought that was the right thing to do, playing with the culture at that time and playing with the familiarity of the character and the genre. Much like what Wes did with the *Scream* movies, referring to the culture of horror fans, which we do all the time now. It was a sort of deconstruction of the horror movie — which had to be done because the tropes of the horror film had become so familiar to the fans that we had to refer to them eventually — and playing with what was going on in the culture, whether it was Gameboys, rap or skateboards. But in the original *Nightmare on Elm Street* blueprint, Freddy was always playing around with gallows humour, whether he cut off his fingers in part one or he eviscerated Tina and wore her face as a mask when he came to the door at Nancy's house. Did we go too far? Probably. But as I say, again in my book, sometimes we gave the editors an option, gave them something really violent and dark, and gave them something wacky — sometimes we'd improvise a line and sometimes we'd shuffle the deck and put that joke at the end of the scene, like a punctuation point. I think that sometimes when the editors were rushed, they abused that trust and used the jokes a little too much. But I will say that the hardcore fans do love that and that's one of the reasons for the lasting success.

**JEH:** The first one was definitely the one that interested me the most because that was really the genesis of the whole thing and I think that Freddy was a bit different. It was less campy and a little more serious. But I definitely had fun with where the character went. It was very sardonic and Robert did an incredible job with it.

*Describe your approach to becoming the character.*

**JEH:** It took me a while to figure out what I was doing. Sam sent me this big book of serial killers. He also sent me *Nofreedom*, just to take a look at it. There was something about that film that was just intriguing, something about that character. Anyway, I was poring through the book, looking at various serial killers,

## Nightmares IN PLASTIC

BY JAMES BURRELL

**W**ITH FREDDY'S STRATOSPHERIC RISE IN POPULARITY IN THE '80s — particularly after 1987's campy *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: The Dream Warriors* — the character became a mass-marketed pop culture phenomenon, spawning not only more movie sequels, but also a TV series, video games and a whack of merchandise, some of which tested the limits of what was deemed acceptable for children. We've picked five of the weirdest, silliest and most controversial collectibles to bear that scarred visage.

**TALKING FREDDY KRUEGER DOLL** — Matchbox 1989

This eighteen-inch poseable doll featured cloth costuming and a removable forehead that exposed his brain underneath. Pull his string and hear one of five phrases, including "Let's Be Friends" and "Pleasant Dreams." Parents protested the huggable, child-murderer doll ("For ages 3 and up") prompting Matchbox to discontinue production and some stores to yank the toy from shelves. But enough made it out there that they're relatively easy to find on eBay.



AN

SAM BAYER MADE SOME OF THE MOST FAMOUS MUSIC VIDEOS OF THE PAST TWENTY YEARS. NOW HE TRAINS HIS LENS ON FREDDY'S HORROR.

## EYE FOR ELM STREET

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ BY DAVE ALEXANDER ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**AS OF THIS WRITING, THE JURY'S STILL OUT ON WHETHER OR NOT THE REMAKE OF A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET** will make genre fans flip their

beds, but one thing's for sure, it'll look great. That's because it's yet another American horror movie remake helmed by an accomplished music video director. There's already been Marcus Nispel's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (and Friday the 13th, Dave Meyer's *The Hitcher* and Andrew Douglas' *The Amityville Horror* to name some of the big ones. And if these particular films seem to have a similar style – saturated colours (heavy on the blue), ambitious set design and plenty of grime – it's probably because all of them are produced by blockbuster filmmaker Michael Bay (*Bad Boys*, *Armageddon*, *Transformers*). To round out the biggest franchise titles, add Rob Zombie's *Halloween* reboots to that list of movies that, with the arguable exception of *TCM*, have been panned by most fans and critics.

Why should we expect more from Sam Bayer's new *Elm Street*?

"There's something that makes you who you are as a filmmaker and there was something that I was obviously attracted to, which is something darker and macabre and gothic," explains the director, over the phone from LA, where he's deep in *Elm Street* post-production. "It's why, in the heyday of music videos, I worked with certain artists and did some dark, surreal videos. I can certainly see the unexplained dark quality of the dream-like sequences I did in music videos being connected to some of the dream-like sequences in this film. That's where my imagination goes, and I think that's something Michael Bay responded to."

What sets this *Elm Street* apart from the aforementioned franchises, and perhaps calls for the talents of a music video guy, is the surreal nature of the *Nightmare* world. The series has traditionally been very colourful and full of bizarre landscapes, attention-grabbing set pieces and dream sequence vignettes, so in some ways it's a good fit. From the golden-hued boiler room and cool blue bedroom full of snow, to the candy-coloured diner kitchen and the charred classroom, the trailer for Bayer's film (his first feature, by the way) boasts an eye-popping palette.

And it should as his music video filmography is massive and includes some of the most iconic MTV images of the past two decades, including Blind

Melton's "No Rain," with the beloved bee girl; "Smells Like Teen Spirit," which introduced the world to Nirvana in a school gym; the Cranberries' stark and dirty "Zombie"; and the slime-sodden "American Idiot" for Green Day.

Bayer cites two of his videos in particular as being visual templates for the new *Elm Street*. "If somebody wanted to, they could go back fifteen years and look at my video for Metallica called 'Unleash the Beast,' or the Marilyn Manson video 'Disposable Teens,' which have the DNA of *Nightmare* written all over them, absolutely."

The former video uses imagery taken directly from the surreal 15th-century works of Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch, and the latter employs blasphemous religious iconography and fascist symbolism. Those are compelling artistic wells to draw from, sure, but what about the story? Bayer stresses that he understands where the *Nightmare* films are coming from, both physically and thematically.

"I actually grew up in Columbus, Ohio, and the movie takes place in the fictitious town of Springwood, Ohio. So I didn't have to go too far to think about where I come from and the strangeness of Middle America and this almost David Lynch-like quality, like *Blue Velvet* or something. The world Wes Craven created was this fishbowl that the kids live in, where their reality isn't the same reality of the adults. And there's a really kind of gothic America feeling to that stuff – it's like Norman Rockwell turned on its ear."

Bayer, who has no plans to make another *Elm Street* movie, feels that the series is all about creating a recognizable world bubbling with horrific possibilities beneath its crust, just waiting to erupt in geysers of trauma. The challenge, of course, is making the dark, surreal environment still feel genuine.

"There's something dirty, grimy and horrible beneath the shiny veneer of the surfaces," he says. "My *Elm Street* is connected to what Craven did. It's clean-cut lawns, white-picket fences and nice houses, but beneath all that there's something disturbing going on. I'd like kids to leave the Cineplex at the mall and walk through the streets of their neighbourhoods and be afraid to go home and go to sleep." ☹

no 2 smiling 'til. Rite. Much, video version  
Sam Bayer re-imagined the surreal world of  
*A Nightmare on Elm Street*.





Freddy's *killer* (from last Friday's preview) Langenkamp slams in the suits in the original film, and as the *remake* played this time by Nancy Maras, plus a *direct* framed *reference* in the original, and in the *remake*.

## Nightmares IN PLASTIC



### FREDDY'S GLOVE — Marty Toys 1989

For school-age *Elm Street* fans tired of getting laced out of shop class for trying to make their own Freddy glove, Marty Toys' replica was a devilment! Although it featured bendable, "play-safe" plastic blades, the adjustable glove was deemed "threatening," as well as "a sadistic toy" by one Dr. Jerome Krassak, a child psychiatrist and clinical associate psychiatry professor at the University of Southern California. To be fair, the packaging did boast that it was "horribly authentic."

looking at their physical characteristics and also reading their bios, trying to figure out what made these guys tick, I started doing some research on the internet and I keyed onto Ed Kemper. I noticed a tribute and I clicked on it and it was a slasher movie based on Ed Kemper, this real-life serial killer. And it passed me off that they made a slasher movie on this guy instead of some real insightful flick. It was at this moment that I realized this was not what I was doing. I'm playing a mythical, supernatural boogymon. Once I really started to embrace that, I found a lot of the answers in the first movie, clips from the other movies and just watching how Robert had dealt with and played the character... I think it was important to give the character some human qualities but at the same time not lose sight of the real hardcore qualities of Freddy, who is an in-your-face, passed-off, boogymon.

RE: This is my interpretation. Freddy exists in a nightmare, Freddy's not at 7-11, Freddy's not seeing a counselor about being an only child or because he was beaten as a kid. Freddy is a specter that now exists as only a fantasy in someone's nightmare. So the way I chose to play Freddy was larger than life. If I was doing a prequel for *Nightmare on Elm Street*, I'd be extremely involved in Freddy Krueger before he got burned and what made him tick, and playing him very real, very matter-of-fact and very psychologically defined. But that was not my interpretation — Freddy is part of a victim's imagination, so he's coloured by that victim's fears, and what terrors and excites that victim, and he's manifest in all those things. So I play him that way. He exists in that exaggerated state, which is in that dreamscape, Freddy isn't sitting somewhere in a diva bar waiting for you to walk in.

Robert has long maintained that *Freddy* represents "neglect" in terms of how the parents treat the kids. What does he represent to you, Jackie?

JEH: He represents to me our darkest, deepest fears, and by that I mean he attacks you in your most vulnerable state, when you're sleeping. You know, you're lying there, you're unconscious. I've always kind of had that fear of being vulnerable in that state. He represents to me that sense of all loss of control.

**Aside from Freddy's realistic burn scars, how else is the remake updating the character?**

JEH: In the original *Nightmare on Elm Street* I remember Nancy's mom kind of gave a lot of Freddy's back story while standing at the stove and just kind of talking about it, and in this film, we've given a lot of that in flashbacks. As Nancy's mom is telling the story, we get to go back and see that. So I think they've fleshed that out a bit more. Not a crazy bunch, but a bit to give it some more dimension, to give it insight and understanding about this sack bastard, and as a result I think it makes his transition into Freddy a little bit more interesting. A little scarier.

**Technology has certainly leapt forward since the original *Nightmare*, and digital effects are standard. Will something get lost with less practical effects, or is there much to gain with the limitless digital palette?**

RE: *Nightmare on Elm Street* certainly lends itself to the new technologies. My god, if there was ever a movie made that could exploit CGI, it's the dreamscape, the landscape of the mind in the nightmares of *Nightmare on Elm Street*. To be honest with you, we ran out of money making the first one. Now, I'm really proud of some of our low-budget effects — my face pushing through the wall beside the crucifix over Heather Langenkamp. I think that was about a \$1.95 effect — but I do know we would've loved to have a little more money and had some CG here and there.

**Of course, there's still extensive makeup involved with the character. Just how torturous is it?**

JEH: I had a real epiphany during the process. I realized that, ironically, over all these years of *Nightmare on Elm Street*, the only person really being tortured was Freddy! The makeup started at six hours and then worked its way down to three-and-a-half hours. So three-and-a-half hours getting in the makeup and then once they say you're wrapped, I still had an hour's worth of makeup removal. It was incredibly arduous, one of the most uncomfortable things I've ever done physically. Literally glue from the top of my chest all the way to my eyeballs, then over my eyeballs and all the way over to the top of my back. Then they would put a foggy contact in my left



### MAXX FX FREDDY KRUEGER — Matchbox 1989

One of the more inventive Freddy likenesses, this ten-inch-tall "Maxx" figure (okay, Ken doll) could be transformed from a smiling, happy-go-lucky guy into our resident sleep stalker. With an authentic miniature Freddy mask, glove and cee turn, kids could give him a Krueger makeover and send him off to terrorize Barbie. It was the first in a line of movie monster sets that would've also included Dracula, the Frankenstein monster and the Alien, but sales were sluggish so Matchbox axed the line after releasing this little terror.



**NEVER SLEEP AGAIN** GATHERS CAST AND CREW FROM THROUGHOUT THE FRANCHISE FOR A DEFINITIVE LOOK AT THE NIGHTMARE UNIVERSE.

# YOU ARE ALL MY CHILDREN NOW!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ BY JAMES BURRELL ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**T**WENTY-SIX YEARS AFTER FREDDY KRUEGER first entered the collective consciousness of North American moviegoers, a new documentary is paying homage to one of horror's most popular and enduring franchises. *Never Sleep Again: The Elm Street Legacy* (coming to DVD this spring) is being touted as the most comprehensive retrospective on the Nightmare on Elm Street series to date, featuring more than 100 interviews with the cast and crew of from all eight original Nightmare films (including Freddy vs. Jason, coverage of the late-'80s Elm Street TV series and the inclusion of rare behind-the-scenes footage, storyboards, publicity and archival material).

"We officially started this project last August," says the program's co-director and producer, Daniel Farrands, who also directed and co-produced the 2009 documentary *He Named Was Jason: 30 Years of Friday the 13th*. "Andrew Kasch, my co-director and editor, suggested doing something on the history of Nightmare because there was going to be a new film and there was still all this interest in the original series. And we're just such big fans of the franchise. So, for us, this is not a promotion for the new movie—it's a celebration of the original series."

Adding authenticity to the project was the addition of Heather Langerkamp, who played Freddy's neice, Nancy, in installments one, three and seven. She's the documentary's host and narrator, as well as one of its executive producers.

"I guess I was just kind of a natural choice to go with," offers Langerkamp. "I think that was due mainly to my friendship with [writer and co-producer] Thommy Hudson. I knew they were going to do a good job on this and take it seriously and weren't going to throw my name on it and not follow through with their responsibilities."

Farrands says that Langerkamp was vital: "It was Heather that legitimized this project. Having her onboard really helped to bring in a lot of other people, such as Wes Craven and a lot of the cast members from the original movie. Then the wheels started turning and other people from the series started wanting to be involved as well."

Among those interviewed for *Never Sleep Again* are creator Craven; producer and New Line Cinema founder/CEO Robert Shaye; stars Robert Englund, John Saxon, Jennifer Rubin and Lisa Wilcox; directors Henry Harkin, Chuck Russell and Jack Sholder; makeup artists David Miller and Kevin Yagher; and composer of the main Elm Street theme Charles Bernstein (see p. 84). But one participant, in particular, makes the filmmakers especially proud of their diligence.

"The most difficult yet most rewarding discovery was Mark Patton, the star of Part 2," confides Farrands.

"We literally put a world-wide call out and we eventually found him living the quiet life in Mexico. Before that, nobody knew where he was. I think I could make a documentary about the story of just trying to find Mark. It was fun and he gave us so many terrific stories."

Farrands admits that some of Elm Street's alumni were unable to participate, often due to scheduling conflicts. He hopes fans will be impressed by those who do appear in the documentary.

"You wish you had everyone, but I think that this is an amazing cross-section of people who were involved. We have every single director, many of the screenwriters, special-effects artists and actors. In most cases, many of these people have not done on-camera interviews since they first were in the films."

Hudson describes *Never Sleep Again* as "an incredible labour of love," right down to the documentary's poster, which was designed by Matthew Joseph Peak, who created the iconic posters for the first five Elm Street films.

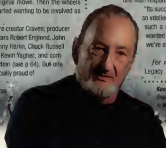
"Everyone involved has worked incredibly hard and has nothing but the highest regard for the material," says Hudson. "We had one goal, and that was to be the definitive look into the world of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*."

It all begs the question: why are both fans and the people who worked on the series still so passionate about *A Nightmare on Elm Street*? Langerkamp holds one man responsible.

"His success was all due to Wes Craven," she says. "He was so intellectually serious about what he was doing and he had such a strong point of view and position about what he wanted to see on film. That's the reason why, 25 years later, we're still talking about this."

For more info on *Never Sleep Again: The Elm Street Legacy*, visit [elmsstreetlegacy.com](http://elmsstreetlegacy.com).

**Keep On Screaming:** Elm Street alumni Robert Englund (left) and Heather Langerkamp (above, hosting) in *Never Sleep Again*.





10. **Worst Nightmare:** (from top) Freddy claims a victim in the remake, Robert Englund as the chest of souls up from Part 4 and Jackie Earle Haley's human incarnation of Krueger burns at the hands of neighbourhood vigilantes.

eye, which would blind it, and a bloodshot contact in my right eye so I could barely see out of that. Then I'd have these fake fingertips on my left hand and I'd have knives on my right hand, so just going to the bathroom was next to impossible. It was just an incredibly uncomfortable feeling. But what was cool was that it was really motivating to the character, meaning that between "Action!" and "Cut!" I would just take all of this weird feeling, then go, "Okay Freddy, this is how you feel – go!"

**RE:** I did an extravagant day with the "chest of souls" for *Nightmare on Elm Street 4*, [directed] by Renny Harlin, but part of that was just being rigged. First there's my real makeup, which takes three-and-a-half to four hours, and then there was the chest of souls, which was the rigging. I had to be literally screwed to a piece of plywood so I wouldn't move because they were inter-cutting between the animatronic chest of souls, which was sewed to me, and me reacting to that, and the puppets that were coming out of that. So there was the animatronic chest, the puppeting me in my makeup, then a giant torso matched to the chest of souls, and the animatronic head. I was up there all day. It was the only time my father ever visited me on the set and I was fastened to a 3 1/4-inch piece of plywood. [Imitating his father] "What? Give up showbiz?"

**The ambitious makeup and gore gags definitely contributed to the character's longevity. What else is there about Freddy that has made him so enduring, and more mainstream than the likes of Jason Voorhees, Michael Myers or Leatherface?**

**JER:** I just think he was always the most interesting of that group, the most multidimensional. He was the most real and the one, I think, that created more questions. He made you want to know, "Who is this guy?" "What's his background?" "What drives him?" I also think it was the whole idea behind the movies and the world that he lived in, with his supernatural ability to get into your dream and affect you in a way that would then affect you in the real world. In that group of films, it was the most dynamic and most interesting, and as a result, the most fun thing.

**RE:** First of all, it's a great story. The gimmick that Wes came up with here is the result, I think, of him reading something in the *LA Times* about Cambodian refugees dying in their sleep because they couldn't wake themselves up and get down their nightmares, or write song lyrics about their nightmares, or paint their nightmares, to purge that stuff. It's such a great hook that this legend can manifest itself into the legend of this pedophile, this child killer that didn't quite go all the way to hell because he was burned alive by vigilante parents, so he manifests himself in the nightmares of the children and relatives of his victims. It's such a great hook that he turns their own secrets and desires and fantasies and fears on them. So, Freddy becomes instantly then the logo of this great idea. And Freddy himself is one of the first horror characters with a real distinct personality, and he loves his work, as I've always said. He's sort of turned a lot of teenage vernacular and contemporary culture back on itself in his enjoyment of his revenge. And he is unapologetic.

**Jackie has signed on for three Elm Street films. Any advice?**

**RE:** I just wanna give Jackie a great list of all the fan festivals that I think are my favourites, because I think that after you do a movie like that, you can get preoccupied by how big it is, and I think it would be great to give him some distance from Hollywood to attend some of these wonderful European festivals where you can feel the love, but also get a little distance from the whole thing – it's always been real good therapy for me.

**Finally, what's Freddy's worst nightmare?**

**RE:** Beauty, because he never had it, never will, and now he's disfigured. When Freddy dreams of beauty, when he dreams of his potential victims and things like that, it's not really satisfying to him because he can never obtain that. He loathes beauty and beauty scares him, and he must kill it, he must end it.

**JER:** What would Freddy's worst nightmare be? If the kids stopped dreaming.

## Nightmares IN PLASTIC



### FREDDY'S GREATEST HITS – VIC Records 1987

While not slashing teens, our beloved burnt victim found time to release *Freddy's Greatest Hits*, a novelty album sung by female vocalists with intermittent Krueger commentary. There were originals on the vinyl release, such as "Down in the Boiler Room," but most tracks were '50s and '60s era covers (i.e. "All I Have to Do is Dream" and "In the Midnight Hour") with a Krueger makeover – it's safe to say that Freddy and the Dreamers' original "Do the Freddy" didn't contain the lyrics "In the boiler room, he'll be coming soon."

### FREDDY FRIGHT SQUINTER – Entertech 1989

"Slip your hand into the Finnish face and watch Freddy squirt water all over the place!" warned the box for the Freddy Fright Squinter. Consisting of a surprisingly detailed rubber Freddy head with a tube and squeeze bulb hidden inside, this was an elaborate water gun. Even better, though, was the hilarious box art featuring an enthusiastic little tyke with his arms showed up Freddy's "decorated" head. Resourceful kids could also re-purpose the toy into a puppet.



WHAT HAPPENED WAS UNSPEAKABLE  
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT WAS UNIMAGINABLE

"THE MOST FRIGHTENING GHOST STORY  
SINCE THE ORPHANAGE"

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# GROSS ANATOMY

YES, IT'S EXACTLY WHAT THE TITLE PROMISES — THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE IS A NAUSEATING EXERCISE IN MAD SCIENCE THAT BROADENS THE SCOPE OF BODY HORROR, SEGMENT BY SEGMENT.

IT'S A COMMON CONCEPT IN MOVIES THAT WHEN THE MAD SCIENTIST REVEALS HIS INSANE PLAN, THE PROTAGONISTS WILL DO ANYTHING TO ENSURE HE DOESN'T PREVAIL. But in *The Human Centipede (First Sequence)*, the full implementation of the evil doctor's diabolical scheme simply gets the party started.

"When I wrote the script, I really wanted the crazy idea to happen," explains Dutch filmmaker Tom Six, "because I knew the audience would think, 'Hey, you're never gonna show that! You'll build up the tension but that'll never happen!'"

Before *The Human Centipede* lapses into irretrievable mentalness, however, it begins like many a horror film, with two mindless American girls (played by newcomers Ashley C. Williams and Ashlynn Yennie) stranded in some backwoods. (In this case, in Germany after blowing a tire on their rental car while on a European vacation.) In search of

help, they stumble upon a mansion that's home to a retired surgeon by the name of Dr. Heiler (Dieter Laser), a deranged but brilliant fiend who kidnaps the girls to use in one of his crazy experiments. Soon after, audience members find themselves longing for the comfort of those familiar beginnings as Six plunges the viewers headfirst down the rabbit hole of unspeakable perversion. You see, in his professional life, Dr. Heiler was renowned for separating conjoined twins, but now, with nothing but trop time on his hands, he's grown obsessed with the idea of joining people together to create one functioning entity.

To tackle the logistics of such an operation, Six enlisted the aid of a bona fide surgeon to devise a method of connecting the bodies, end to end, in a veritable "human centipede" formation.

"I'm really fascinated by medical science," admits Six, "and doctors have all kinds of ideas



“THE SURGEON THAT I CONSTRUCTED THE CENTIPEDE WITH LOVED THE IDEA. IT'S VERY SICK, OF COURSE, AND HE HAD TO THINK ABOUT IT FIRST, BUT IT'S 100% MEDICALLY ACCURATE.”

TOM SIX  
DIRECTOR



about how operations can be done or should be done. Of course, in modern society, doctors can only do their thing within limits and within laws. So I can imagine, in the story, that if you used to separate Siamese twins in your daily job, when you retire you still have this enormous intelligence and this passion to operate. So the basic idea is that [Dr. Heller] wants to create something again, to operate on something. So I reversed it. I thought, 'He must put people together!' The surgeon that I constructed the centipede with loved the idea. It's very sick, of course, and he had to think about it first, but it's 100% medically accurate. He wrote a medical report from A to Z about how you could actually do this operation and keep people alive. And that's fascinating."

What is easily one of the most repulsive and jaw-dropping tales to befall a set of characters in recent horror movie history, the operation in question involves sewing three people together by grafting the mouth to the rectum, thus joining their respective digestive tracts to form a continuous passage.

"Whenever we saw a child molester on television, I always told friends that they should stitch his mouth to the ass of a fat truck driver," confesses Six. "That would be a good punishment for him! And everyone found that so gross and so horrible. ... I thought it would make a great basis for a horror film. So that started it all — just some sick joke."

*The Human Centipede* marks the first excursion into horror for the 38-year-old filmmaker, known primarily for his twisted black comedies. But he's an ardent fan of the genre, particularly the early films of David Cronenberg.

"I love his work," says the filmmaker. "I like that body horror. I always loved films that could actually happen. I'm not a science fiction man so I don't like films with monsters and stuff that couldn't happen, but in some of Cronenberg's films, everything you see could have some basis in reality. And of course, I love the French films like *Martyrs*, although they're kind of humourless. But I love it when a filmmaker dares to go beyond borders, to treat the audience to something they've never seen before and cross a lot of lines. The French are really good at that."

As one might expect, finding actors with the "intestinal fortitude" to handle the material wasn't easy. To cast the American girls, the filmmakers travelled to New York to hunt down participants willing to spend hours at a time half-naked, on their hands and knees, lined up ass-to-mouth, while being abused by a mad doctor.

"We cast a lot of girls and I made drawings of the human centipede. A lot of girls were really angry," explains Six. "They thought I was a really sick guy. But there were others that were intrigued by the idea. [When] ten girls were left, we put them on their hands and knees and let them sit there for ten to fifteen minutes to really see how strong they were, because it's physically and emotionally very intense to sit on



# I LOVE IT WHEN A FILMMAKER DARES TO GO BEYOND BORDERS.

RON SIX

*Stuck In The Middle With You: Lindsay (Julie C. Williams) discovers just what it means to be the middle segment of the centipede, and (below) Dr. Heiter (Dieter Laser) marvels at his creation.*

your hands and knees while a guy is walking around you. Some of the girls gave tremendously good reactions and were totally not afraid of being like this. The best ones of that group, we tested them and put them behind each other. Of course, there were girls that were afraid to come too close to the ass of the person in front of them. So we knew that's not going to work. At the end, I had these two great girls that are in the film that are fearless almost. They really understood what I wanted and I think they're great for it."

The third part of the human centipede formation is played by a little-known Japanese actor by the name of Akio Kikumura. It seems particularly fitting that Six cast him as the head of the centipede because this is the kind of perverse body horror premise that one would almost expect to see emerge from Japan, which has a reputation for creatively exploring the borders of both horror and pornography.

"I was influenced by the films of Takashi Miike," explains Six. "His early work is really genius so I wanted a Japanese actor to be in the film as well. And, of course, I wanted German and American actors too, so it kind of relates to World War II."

At first, I wanted a German doctor because Nazi surgeons have always been something of a nightmare for me. I think that's one of the scariest things—being experimented on by Nazi doctors. And because I saw a lot of clichéd horror films from

America with pretty girls getting slaughtered, I really wanted two naive American girls."

Not unexpectedly, sitting on their hands and knees with their faces buried in somebody else's behind for up to nine hours a day posed a number of challenges for the actors, both obvious and not so obvious.

"I shot the film in chronological order so during the first half of the film, they were very happy and doing their thing, but I always knew there would come a day when they had to sit on their hands and knees for the rest of the time," explains Six. "And they were on their hands and knees nine hours a day with Dieter walking around them, treating them badly. In some scenes, the girls actually are crying because of the kind of stress and the emotions. It's very vulnerable to sit there with your bare breasts, almost half naked in front of this big crew. And of course, the actors made jokes. They had

to wash properly before going to the shoot and not fart and stuff. There was a lot of fun on the set but it takes a brave actor to do this, I think."

For the depiction of the human centipede itself, many of the really graphic results of the operation are largely hidden from the audience. Viewers don't, for instance, see the grafts, as they're concealed by a set

of bandages with little marks revealed than the stitches on the actors' faces. But this tactic of concealment is very effective and quite disturbing because it allows the unseen details to wreak havoc on the imagination.

"People who have no clue [about the film] are really shocked by the idea of showing people ass-to-mouth," explains Six. "By concealing it a little bit with the bandages and stuff, somehow it's more watchable and the gory stuff happens more in your head. You don't actually see the shit going through the people. And that's what I wanted. The scene where [Heiter] says, 'Feed her! Feed her!' there's nothing happening on the screen, really. It's happening in your head."

But beyond the bizarre central concept, perhaps the most memorable aspect of the film is the mawkish Dr. Heiter, who is played to terrifying effect by veteran German actor Dieter Laser (*Levi: The Son of a Gun*), a notably sinister-looking character. The dedicated method actor got so into his psychotic role that he refused to eat with the rest of the crew.

"He's a genius," remarks Six. "I saw a couple of films with him. I love his face, his darkness. But I thought he was never cast in the right role. I thought he was larger than life and perfect for the character. So we got his agent's phone number in Berlin and made an appointment with him. I told him what I was trying to do and I gave him the script and he was crazy about it. And he was that character. He really was Dr. Heiter when he was sitting in Berlin in his chair. He has an amazing charisma and, on set, everyone was a little afraid of him."

I'VE BEEN ELBOW DEEP IN THE BLOOD, BILE  
AND FECES OF OVER 100 DIFFERENT SPECIES  
OF ANIMALS, INCLUDING HUMAN...  
...THIS IS MY STORY.

## CONFESSIONS OF A ROGUE TAXIDERMIST

by THE GREAT ORBAX

I HAVE HAD MANY PROFESSIONS THROUGHOUT THE YEARS... FARMER, SIDESHOW FREAK, PROFESSIONAL WRESTLER, EVEN UNIVERSITY PHYSICS PROFESSOR. Since 2003, however, I have been taking dead animals and sewing them together to create new dead animals that never existed in the first place. I call it "fixing god's mistakes." I've made alligator boys, two-headed goats, pygmy mammoths, griffins, mermaids, shrunken heads, monkey boys, and even a sasquatch, for travelling freakshows, museums and private collectors around the world.

My story begins on a farm in the middle of nowhere, where I grew up. The killing and butchering of an animal for the family to eat was a common occurrence in my childhood, and I was active in hunting, fishing and the preparing of wild game. As a result, I not only developed an interest in taxidermy, but I also got to know my way around a carcass. An early aptitude for science, and a lifelong fascination with monsters and monster making, set the building blocks for what would later be dubbed by the media as "rogue taxidermy."

In the early 2000s, I began my career as a sideshow freak. As time went on, I wanted to expand the show to include a display of oddities and abnormalities, the kind you would see in the old days when travelling carnivals brought their freakshows to towns across the country. Not having the thousands of dollars required to purchase a collection of that kind, I did what any enterprising freak would do: I picked up a glue gun, a scalpel, a needle and thread and set about creating my own menagerie à la P.T. Barnum. As my collection grew, soon commissions for other showmen turned my hobby into a business, called *French Cunnosities*.

When people find out what I do, the response is universally interested, followed by varied levels of disgust. I am quick to point

out that I don't kill these creatures in order to stuff them, I simply use their discarded bodies. In many ways, I'm the ultimate recycler. Any individual specimen in my workshop can be recycled for not only its skin, but its bones (which I clean and reuse), the organs (which I often wet preserve), and even the muscle tissue (which I mummify). Every piece of every creature can be used for something! I'm better off saving everything, than saying, "Now if I had only kept that possum eye..."

Each time I build a new critter, I'm presented with new challenges. Oftentimes, methods of preserving which are ideal for one case will be useless in the next. The same applies to building the understructure or "body," which I stretch the skins over. I have developed a unique way of combining traditional taxidermy methods alongside modern special effects techniques, and for some unknown reason the finished products always appear to be screaming.

I'm often asked what the strangest thing I've ever worked on is, which is open to a lot of interpretation. I can definitely tell you the most difficult project I've worked on, though, which was a cyclopic fetal pig. Skinning one isn't easy, picture a tube of cookie dough, and now put sausage legs on it. Turning a body like that inside out is hard enough, but then try to prevent the paper thin, underdeveloped skin from tearing. Saving and preparing the skull also becomes difficult because the bone hasn't fully calcified and any incision can cut right through it. This difficult dissection process can take up to three hours to perform.

Other specimens present their own psychological challenges. For example, as a long-time cat owner, I worried that it might freak me out to work with felines. As it turns out, there is more than one way to skin them, and none are that difficult. My cat at home has come to enjoy her new stuffed companions, and often sits amongst them.

Lately my work in rogue taxidermy has opened a new frontier: humans. I was recently asked to wet preserve, or "fix," as they call it in pathology labs, a human placenta. By removing all water from the specimen and replacing it with

special preservative chemicals, the delicate placentas will sit in a jar of solution for indefinite viewing. The weirdest part of that job has actually been interacting with the woman whose afterbirth I'd been handling. Of course, there's good reason why they call it *rogue taxidermy*.

For more on Orbax, visit [frenchcunnosities.com](http://frenchcunnosities.com) and [monstersatblack.com](http://monstersatblack.com)





*The Maddest Scientist Dr. Heder wields his vintage firearm.*

*The Human Centipede* also falls within the backwoods survivalist subgenre, which has been endlessly revisited in American cinema over the last few years and cleverly reinvented in France and Belgium, with films such as *Frontier(s)* and *Calvaire*. But *Six*'s unique take on the tradition definitely positions his movie in the latter category by subverting many of our expectations of the subgenre, beginning with the colour palette. He utilizes very stark, bright colours as opposed to the kind of monochromatic, desaturated tones that have become commonplace in films of this nature over the past decade.

"When I saw this film in my mind, I always saw this bright, almost happy atmosphere, because of the contrast of the images, of the centipede and all the dark stuff going on," explains *Six*. "For me, it works way more effectively when the surroundings are beautifully shot with beautiful colours. That's why some people say the centipede looks beautiful, with the three people behind each other. But I knew if I had shown it in a different way, with the darkness and lots of dirtiness, I think it would have been less effective. When you see them for the first time as the centipede, when they wake up in the living room, you see the sun going through the windows with this orange light almost like heaven opening up. And the doctor is like the happiest man in the world. And for me, that's what makes it so shocking — those elements."

Another of the film's inventive twists on the subgenre is its wonderful variation on the ubiquitous chase scene. In marked contrast to classic backwoods sequences (such as *Leatherface* running down his victims with a chainsaw), here the protagonists must attempt their escape while being unable to move much faster

than a tortoise. This low speed chase is remarkably effective because every step they take is agonizing and every sudden movement tears their stitches apart. It becomes almost unbearable to watch.

"When I thought of the chase scene, I really wanted it to be really slow because the idea of not being able to move fast is horrible when you want to run away," explains *Six*. "I think the slowness makes it even more horrible."

*Six* straddles an interesting line with his film, which constantly struggles between its darkly comedic and utterly revolting elements. This tonal dichotomy has provoked a wide range of responses in audiences to date, with many not sure whether to laugh or vomit.

"I have this sick, pitch-black sense of humour," he admits. "But when I [was] writing the script, I never thought about humour. I thought about the medical procedure and the creation of something. But there are some people who see humour in it and there are some who don't see any. I think it depends on your own state of mind or your view on life. When I showed it at festivals, there were a lot of people who walked out. They were absolutely not amused. Not at all!"

*The Human Centipede (First Sequence)* has been picked up for distribution in North America by IFC Films and will be given a simultaneous limited theatrical release and video-on-demand premiere on April 28. And *Six* is already working on the sequel, *The Human Centipede II: Full Sequence*, which he begins shooting in May.

"I don't want to say too much, but it's not a standard sequel," he offers. "It's something completely different. I can tell you the tagline, '100% medically accurate' was the first one. The second installment will be '100% medically inaccurate!' And it's going to be a centipede of twelve people. I couldn't show everything in part one because the idea itself had to settle in first, but with people now used to it, I can go full force and show things that have never been shown before. That will really upset people!"

## THE BODY ECLECTIC

### TAXIDERMIA

Starring Csaba Czene, Gergely Trócsányi and Marc Barché  
Directed by György Pálfi  
Written by György Pálfi and Zsófia Ruttyay  
E1

Best Film You Didn't See in 2009, that's what this venerable publication called *Taxidermia*. Having just watched it a second time, I can see why it's got miles of style and a matter-of-fact rococo wit, if that makes any sense. I think it might even out-Cronenberg Cronenberg and that's saying a hell of a lot. Based on the stories of a Hungarian writer you've never heard of (his name is Lajos Parti Nagy), *Taxidermia* anatomizes three generations of Hungarian men linked by some pretty bizarre hereditary fetishes.

The first concerns Morosgovanyi, a post-WWI army orderly wiring his time away by putting his penis in anything that vaguely resembles female genitalia. Director György Pálfi puts us in the head (and eyes) of this chronic masturbator, as he obsesses over every physical detail of farm life in a tireless quest to get off. In a satirical flourish characteristic of the film's literary source material, Morosgovanyi spectacularly ejaculates into the night sky, his semen joining the stars of the firmament.

That semen finds its way into the innards (and this movie is all about innards) of his general's portly wife, who promptly gives birth to a little boy with a pig's tail. The boy grows up to become the subject of the film's second story: Balaizony, a lovesick speed eater who, in the name of sport, shovels vast quantities of food into his mouth. Body horror breaks new ground with the vomitorium scenes alone, but watching this



sweet-soaked chronic masturbator make his romantic overtures reaches a level of comic grotesque seldom seen in cinema.

Rounding out the triptych is the story of Balaizony's son Lajos (pictured), a weirdo taxidermist turned manservant to his dad, who in his retirement has degenerated into a solo-bound Jabba the Hut. Finding him snacked on by his cats, Lajos stuffs his father before turning the scalp on himself in a grisly coda that — if nothing else — proves that

Morosgovanyi's sperm does indeed shine over the generations.

Bizarre and fascinating, *Taxidermia* is like a stroll through a living Mütter Museum where the exhibits just kind of sit there, oblivious to scrubby and indifferent to meaning. Thankfully, the heart of this film is not just another exposed organ; those who care to look will find the second bile of alienation and loneliness leaking from the gaping flesh. Nauseating, yes, but more than mere biology.

RODRIGO GUZDIO

# GET BEHIND THE WHEEL A TWISTED TALE OF MURDER AND REVENGE

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PHILADELPHIA TATTOO PHENOM  
*Paul Acker*  
EXPANDS THE ART OF HORROR INK.  
ONE GHASTLY VISAGE AT A TIME

# Flesh for Friends

by April Swilling

**P**AUL ACKER'S WORK IS A BIZARRE CIRCUS OF CANDY-COLOURED NIGHTMARES MADE FLESH – LITERALLY.

The Philadelphia-based artist is enjoying a growing reputation as one of the best horror tattooists in the business, racking up dozens of awards at tattoo and horror conventions. Though his repertoire includes a wide range of styles and subjects, Acker specializes in realistic portrait work inspired by more than a century of macabre culture and entertainment. His portfolio is a rogues' gallery of the most iconic creations in horror history: besides classic bêtes such as Nosferatu, the Gill Man and Frankenstein's monster, he's inked practically every contemporary flesh-eater, bloodsucker and masked killer you care to name.

The artist's work recalls the legendary monster portraits of illustrator Basil Gogos, whom Acker cites as his childhood hero and his biggest influence. "I've really been into Basil's work since I was young. His art fascinated me, the way he could take black and white images of monsters and transform them into masterful works of art, how he could take something that most people consider ugly or scary and make it beautiful. That's why I decided on working with colour instead of the more traditional black and grey tones you usually see with horror tattoos – it really opens the door to more creative decisions."

Gogos made a career out of reverting the black and white celluloid beasts of vintage horror by rendering them in brilliant Popsicle hues. To create his tattoos, Acker borrows Gogos' trademark technique of imagining his subjects bathed in a kaleidoscope of vibrantly coloured lights and, like Gogos, he seems to have an entire studio's worth of light kits and photography sets that exist only in his head.

"Basil is definitely a master of dynamic lighting and colour transition," he says. "I also love the looseness of his work, where you can almost see every brush stroke, but it's still incredibly detailed. There are some influences that show in my work. I always try to add dynamic lighting to the subject and try to give the tattoo a more painterly quality, instead of just reproducing a photo."

Acker has applied the technique to a broad spectrum of horror subjects, from classic monsters to grindhouse ghouls and modern-day psychopaths. His portraits beautifully capture both the characters and the actors who immortalized them. Elsa Lanchester is a vision of green-skinned pathos as the Bride of Frankenstein; Vincent Price's staccato eyes gleam from the ruined face of Dr. Phibes; Sid Haig's Captain Spaulding and Heath Ledger's Joker scowl in full makeup and skin-crawling malevolence. More conventional subjects also get the horror treatment under Acker's needles. A portrait of Mozart comes complete with dead, pupil-less eyes and bits of missing flesh, and Patricia Arquette clutches a cigarette in blood-spattered fingers "to make it a little more morbid."

Whether it's the furry tufts of a Joe Dante gremlin or the suppurating flesh of a Fulci zombie, Acker has an uncanny knack for rendering realistic features in a rich palette of psychedelic colours. Rather than simply using skin as a canvas on which to display his designs, he lays down swirls of background colour and layers of texture that create a vivid chiaroscuro effect – three-dimensional chambers of ink and skin that almost seem to exist independently of their flesh-and-blood hosts.

Acker first began tattooing in 2001, but he's been drawing since he was three-years-old – around the same time he discovered horror movies. Like many pop artists who first drew breath during the golden age of shopping malls and sticker fairs, Acker originally found inspiration on the cluttered shelves of his local video store.





I DON'T JUST TATTOO THESE IMAGES BECAUSE I THINK THEY'RE COOL  
OR BECAUSE THEY'RE POPULAR. I TATTOO THEM BECAUSE  
THAT'S WHAT I'M INTO. THAT'S WHAT I LOVE.

*Paul Focker*

"I grew up in the '80s, when splatter films were everywhere," says the 27-year-old. "I used to go to the video store almost every day just to stare at all the VHS boxes, fuck when movie posters and boxes were actually art. My mom was cool and let me rent them, so I got into horror at a young age. I loved slasher movies like *Friday the 13th*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Predator* and *Black Christmas*."

As you'd probably guess from looking at his work, Focker is still a superfan. He makes regular appearances at horror conventions, and has a sizeable collection of DVDs, magazines and genre ephemera.

"I don't just tattoo these images because I think they're cool or because they're popular," he states. "I tattoo them because that's what I'm into, that's what I love. I put a

lot of my personality into my work, which I think is extremely important for an artist of any medium. I also try to bring a unique style and approach to my work, which is really important in being a successful tattoo artist today."

Focker inked his first tattoo—a rendition of the classic *Masters of Horror* *Crimson Ghost*—not long after he graduated from a south Philadelphia performing and visual arts high school. A couple of "shitty odd jobs" led him to take his art portfolio over to a local tattoo shop, where he was promptly offered a gig. After practicing on friends and family, he was doing portraits and horror-themed pieces full-time within a couple of weeks, first in black and gray, then swiftly graduating to full-color work. After a few years Focker believed he'd learned all he could at the shop and decided to move on. He worked in New Jersey briefly before opening his own hometown digs, Deep Six, with a friend in March 2006.

Since then, he's won more than 50 tattooing awards, many for his remarkably realistic depictions of some of horror's most beloved denizens. Focker says that even when he's inking a pre-existing character, he strives to make every image his own.

"I love when a client comes to me with a really obscure movie reference or idea," he explains. "I just think it makes the piece more interesting. It makes the tattoo more individual. Luckily, my clients usually give me a lot of creative freedom outside of the subject matter; even then, they sometimes let me do almost anything I want. The most important part to me is making the tattoo stand out and be very original, while still keeping the essence of the reference material."

For Focker, the already fine lines between the worlds of horror cinema and skin art blurred even more when he tattooed Tom Savini (his past October during Spooky Empire's Ultimate Horror Convention in Orlando (pictured below). What was it like to put needles and ink to the skin of one of his childhood heroes?

"It was a little nerve-wracking," Focker admits. "I grew up on his FX and even wanted to get into FX work because of him, before I decided on tattooing as my career choice. We ended up doing two matching skulls on both of his shoulders, above the existing tattoos that his brother did. He's actually in really great physical shape right now, so we did something that would work well with his body. We were originally going to incorporate some Universal monsters into the design because he's a huge fan of them, but in the end, we decided to keep it simple."

Besides tattooing, Focker also paints on canvas (the preferred medium of Bogos). He first picked up the brushes when he was thirteen but put them down for a while after he started tattooing.

"I put all the effort I could into tattooing, and put painting on the back burner," he says. "I picked it up again about three years ago and plan on keeping at it. My art style has changed dramatically since I started tattooing, so it's cool to use techniques I learned from tattooing and apply them to paint, and vice versa."

Focker's paintings (pictured left: *Vampire*) have hung in galleries in Philadelphia and New York. He'll also be involved with a couple of shows this year (check paulfocker.com for regular updates). He describes his paintings as "definitely dark and horror-oriented—I like to paint stuff I'd like to see hanging in my house."

Though Focker will undoubtedly continue to develop his skills and his reputation as a horror tattooist and painter of dark art, he plans to broaden his artistic range. He hopes to release a DVD next year that will include short films, interviews and even a tattoo workshop, which will demonstrate his artistic approach and professional methodology.

"Other than that," he says, "I plan on making a lot more monsters, ghouls and madmen on peoples' skin. It makes the world a more beautiful place."





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BRINGS THE BAND'S DARKEST  
INFLUENCES TO LIGHT.

# Atlas to the Arcane

BY EVAN DAVIES

**THE WAND OF THE  
OF THE RAW, E OF FILTH'S**  
back catalogue is like embarking on a buxian intellectual journey through the recesses of occultism and macabre-minded pop culture. Known for being one of extreme metal's most divisive – and, arguably, ubiquitous – bands, CoF's influences run the gamut from Countess Bathory and Cthulhu to Canobites and satanic rites. Its founder Dani Filth's lyrics and conceptual direction have long alluded to his encyclopedic knowledge of all things arcane, dreadful and dreary. Then, five years ago, Filth and British journalist/culture writer Gavin Baddeley set out to channel all that esoteric lore into book form.

The fruit of their labours, *The Gospel of Filth: A Bible of Decadence & Darkness* (out now from FAB Press), is a sprawling, impressively researched omnibus of Filth's interests and influences, along with a plethora of personal asides, anecdotes and musings – all fleshed out and expounded upon at length by Baddeley.

"It's cool because, quite selfishly, people can look at it and experience my thoughts and belief system," says Filth from his home in Ipswich, England. "As a book it tends to bring more to the occult and horror films than the band. The band sort of serves as the road map."

For Baddeley, who previously penned *Goth Chic: A Connoisseur's Guide to Dark Culture*, the choice to focus exclusively on Cradle of Filth, to view the world of horror – from Hammer classics to real-life serial killers – through that one particular



lens, was a foregone conclusion; they were the perfect fit.

"There's a depth and intricacy to Cradle's material that demanded the approach," says Baddeley of the band *Metal Hammer* magazine once named the most successful British heavy metal outfit since Iron Maiden. "Particularly in Dani's lyrics, which are laden with obscure references and playful wordplay hanging on a vast array of myths and literature. There are perhaps other bands where you could apply the same approach, but not many. Cradle of Filth is the definitive example of that interchange between the 'street' culture of modern rock and the more respectable realms of art and 'high' culture."

It's within those cultural realms that the book embarks on its lengthy journey, and it's obvious from the get-go that the authors leave no stone unturned. A glance through the 500-page tome reveals chapters organized chronologically and thematically, each based on one of Cradle of Filth's ten albums. (The hardcover edition includes an extra chapter of Dani's tour stories.) So, for instance, the chapter inspired by their album *Misanthropy* – named after the location where a gruesome Old Testament tale of mass slaughter took place – focuses on the last century of honor and its cultural significance.

For Baddeley, tackling the project chronologically seemed like the best way to tie the book together with the band's history, while still providing a functional framework for a lot of diverse material. ("There was the odd hiccup," he can-

cedes. "Not least because they would insist upon recording new albums while I was writing the damn thing!") To facilitate the collaborative process, Fith would discuss topics for the book while Baddley recorded the singer's thoughts, which he would then work into the text as sidebars.

*The Gospel of Fith* opens with "Invoking the Unclean – Esoteric England," a chapter that provides a history of evil in the British Isles, and closes with "Godspeed on the Devil's Thunder – The Black Arts," which offers a look at the occult in all its blasphemous glory. In between, *Gospel* utilizes a variety of historical references, including influential figures, personalities and movements – not to mention the various social backlashes they incited – to explore horror, metal- and occult-based subcultures with impressive depth. Dozens of interviews, as well as considerable analysis and interpretation on the part of Baddley and Fith, all merge to create a mosaic patchwork of information.

Other topics expounded upon in the book range from modern horror's debt to childhood fairy tales, to sex, drugs, femininity, all things gothic, and even the Decadent movement, which challenged Victorian sensibilities through use of nihilism and grotesque imagery in art and literature. As a connoisseur of such kind miscellanea, Fith had long felt that a definitive yet accessible work on these subjects had yet to be written.

"There needed to be something more that wasn't clouded by that stand-offish superiority that some authors have," he explains. "There's a lot of information in it, [but] we didn't want to overwhelm people too much. It is something that can be read chronologically ... but [also] something that an everyday Joe can just flip to the chapter about horror movies, or about the dark arts, and find something he's interested in."

To this end, *Gospel* is not only densely packed with information, every page boasts at least one or two glossy, full-colour images, including reproductions of classic horror movie posters, illustrations by artists such as Gustave Doré, full-page gore 'n' girl-themed Cradle of Fith promo shots, candid band pics and even several photos sourced from the authors' personal collections.

Not surprisingly, metal of many varieties frequently pops up in *The Gospel of Fith*. To flesh out its significance, scores of extreme metal musicians and bands, who all share some degree of musical or thematic kinship with Cradle of Fith, are interviewed, including Norwegian black metal scoundrels Gorgoroth and Emperor, murder-metalbers Macabre and occult-rockers Coven, plus more mainstream acts such as Alice Cooper, KISS, Ozzy Osbourne and Black Sabbath. The metal movement is explored critically, with Baddley suggesting, in a chapter dubbed "Harder, Darker, Faster – Rockocalypse Now," that a "cynic's eye view [of black metal] suggests a subgenre that, while melodramatically shunning the limelight, has successfully exploited the media with commendable slyness."

However, since this is still a Cradle of Fith book per se, there's no getting around the fact that nary a page goes by without one of Dani's anecdotes or a mention of his own band. Yet both authors deny that it's a vanity project.

"I'm pretty confident that *Gospel* is much more than a conventional fan book – glorified merchandise for uncritical devotees," says Baddley. "We've worked very hard to provide a definitive road map to the dark side that synthesizes everything I've learned into an engaging reference work. We need signposts to such realms – which Cradle provides – but I believe *Gospel* should provide an eye-opening ride for anybody with an appetite for devilmay and decadence."

Fith shares his optimism about the accessibility of the release.

"I hope a lot of people find some common ground in there," says the singer. "It's all done with a bit of wry sarcasm and deprecating humour. It's less than formal so you feel comforted by it, rather than repulsed as some people might be. I guess it sort of shines a lantern into the murky world of the occult. I think some people can identify with characters in here like Byron and Shelley, some of the horror authors and other historical figures."

Fith insists readers won't have to worry about an overdose of autobiographical self-reflection and melodrama. He's not at that stage, not yet.

"I think an autobiography can just be a bit too much," he says. "I mean, maybe in the future there would be one, but I think we need a bit more history behind us before we start anything like that."

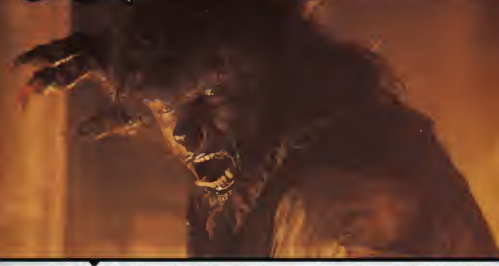


**Shelley Testament:** (from top) An image from Neil Marshall's *Condemned*; *Falcom Raper* before the Resurrection of Christ; Andrew Ecclesville's 19th-century *Devilment* B.C.; (right) co-author Gavin Baddley, and (top) Cradle of Fith songwriter (shot)



# CINEMA

FILM + DVD + REISSUES



## SHEEP IN WOLF'S CLOTHING

### THE WOLFMAN

Starring Benicio Del Toro, Emily Blunt and Anthony Hopkins  
Directed by Joe Johnston  
Written by Andrew Kevin Walker and David Self  
Universal

Honor fans howled in frustration when Joe Johnston's remake of the 1941 Universal horror classic *The Wolf Man* was conspicuously bumped from prime haunting time in October to February's box office graveyard. And though it's not the total disaster one might expect, the well-publicized production troubles clearly took their toll. Stripped of emotional resonance and light on logic, *The Wolfman* is not in the same league as Coppola's accomplished *Dracula*, but it's still a handsome effort that's claws above the popcorn spectacle of *The Mummy* (1999) and *Van Helsing* (2004).

What brings *The Wolfman* back from the brink is its expert production design and evocative cinematography. From foggy forests to gothic town squares, the sometimes pastiche look of the Universal horror classics is updated, creating a beautifully rendered and believably coloured world. Similarly, Rick Baker's makeup effects for the titular monster pay tribute to the original Jack Pierce designs while adding the right touch of ferocity to complement the film's gory attack sequences.

Too bad director Joe Johnston has little to add to this rich backdrop. Blame it on the re-edits or script deficiencies, but the characters' motivations are muddled and large chunks of the story seem out of sequence. Nor is the film able to recapture the despair and struggle that Lon Chaney Jr. brought out in Lawrence Talbot almost seven decades ago. After receiving a nasty animal bite at a gypsy camp, where he's investigating his brother's death, Del Toro's version of the character barely has time to contemplate his cursed fate. Instead, he's preoccupied by inexplicably failing for his brother's ex (Emily Blunt) and eluding a Scotland Yard inspector, played by Hugo Weaving.

And thank goodness for Weaving—the only actor who doesn't appear bored. Del Toro and Anthony Hopkins, who plays Lawrence's father, are oddly disaffected in their roles and any trace of subtlety, including character arcs, appears to have been edited.

*The Wolfman*'s lurky, splintered narrative erratically searches for a theme, touching on the cyclical nature of abuse, the animistic savagery within and even the ethics of torture and killing, but it doesn't commit. In the end, Johnston

simply opts for some crowd-pleasing arterial sprays and a few frustrating jump scares. A longer, possibly more coherent cut of the film is promised for *The Wolfman*'s DVD release. Hopefully, this version won't be neutered, because as it is, this superficial *Wolfman* has no nards.

PAUL CORUPE

## NUCKING FUTZ

### THE CRAZIES

Starring Timothy Olyphant, Radha Mitchell and Joe Anderson  
Directed by Breck Eisner  
Written by Scott Kosar and Ray Wright  
Overline

From high above the Earth, a camera zooms in on the people of rural America. It's this inescapable, all-seeing eye that bookends—or "contains"—Breck Eisner's remake of George A. Romero's 1973 film *The Crazies*, and gives us a modern spin on the tale.

That said, the basic concept remains: small town USA is accidentally infected with a madness-inducing bio-weapon; hazmat-suited soldiers cordon off the town and attempt to contain the outbreak by any means necessary, a small band of locals try to escape both their violent neighbours and the shoot-to-kill soldiers.

This time, however, instead of a commentary on bungled American military action in Vietnam or the Kent State riot killings by the National Guard (in 1970), we've got a modern surveillance society where a faceless Big Brother has even its rural citizens under the microscope, and uses the military to suppress freedom and kill for its secrets.

Deadwood's Timothy Olyphant stars as David Burton, the sheriff of Opden Marsh. While he's your classic ahead-of-the-curve horror protagonist, he doesn't uncover the conspiracy quite soon enough to stop the virus from turning half the town into hollow-eyed psy-



chopaths or get his pregnant wife (played by the always awesome Radha Mitchell: *Silent Hill*, *Rogue*) out of town. Along with his deputy (Joe Anderson) and other locals, he must rescue his brother half from a containment camp, dodge some finger-happy good old boys, skirt the men in gasmasks and fight off the infected. Make that the truly disgusting very, drooping, I-just-ate-a-shit-and-Ebola-sandwich infected – the makeup is top-notch.

The rural setting is refreshing; these are some unforgettable sequences (a thrasher, car wash and pitchfork all get their terrifying due) and making the military a largely faceless entity is an improvement. Shame about the cheap jump scares, cliché last-second rescues and lack of character development.

While Romero tends to use the framework of the genre to express his politics, Esner's remake (for more, read his interview in *AWES!*), much like Zack Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead*, uses Romero's concept and a much bigger budget to aim a well-shot action-packed horror story at the popcorn crowd. You may not get mental for this *Crazies*, but it's still better than most brain-dead remakes.

DAVE ALEXANDER

## JUDGMENT DAY OF THE DEAD

### LEGION

Starring Paul Bettany, Dennis Quaid and Adriana Palacci  
Directed by Scott Stewart  
Written by Peter Schick and Scott Stewart  
Screenplay by



When He made the universe and endowed mankind with the ability to make pizza, God gave humans a pretty good deal. Sure enough, though, we went and ruined His creation with our violence, hatred and rock music – what else can God do except wipe us all out and call a do-over? In *Legion*, He does just that

by sending his angel army to Earth to decimate the population. The rebellious Michael (Paul Bettany), however, still has faith in man. Naturally, he heads to a diner in the Mojave Desert to defend a group of people – including an unborn baby destined to be humanity's saviour – from the incoming apocalypse.

It sounds familiar because this is essentially *Jerryland*-meets-zombie movie, with an added religious bent. Take a few stock characters – the Good Ol' Boy, the Bad Girl, the Upright White Family, the Thug, the Sage – lock 'em in a building and have them work together to defend themselves against an angry horde. Only instead of rotting corpses, they're facing people possessed by angry angels, and their ally is a rebel, not a robot.

But *Legion*, which is already bogged down by boring exposition subbing as character development, collapses under the weight of its lofty ambitions, its gravitas adding unintentional humour at inappropriate moments. God's wrath may be a great excuse for the end of times, but the filmmakers are afraid of – or incapable of – asking and answering the big questions, such as: What's so great about this unborn baby? Why is there a secret angst gun warehouse in LA? Why are Michael and Gabriel "hot" angels, while the rest have black eyes and



Legion: My, what a scream! Well, you have, Grasshopper!

junior shriek teeth? Why did God choose such an inefficient way to wipe out mankind?

Because *Legion* gets so much wrong, the stuff it gets right becomes that much more effective: the action sequences, while few and far between, are tense and chilling and there's no denying that the film looks damn pretty. Dennis Quaid and Charles S. Dutton are welcome faces, even if their performances succumb to the dodgy script. *Legion* isn't bad enough to cause God to launch Operation: End of Days, but it won't restore faith in big-budget horror either.

STACIE POWDER

## DRAWN TO ROMERO

### NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD: REANIMATED

Starring Duane Jones, Judith O'Dea and Judith Ridley  
Written by George A. Romero and John Russo  
Wild Eye Pix

When George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* was released in 1968, a slight technical mishap erased the film's copyright and banished it to that great orphanage of celluloid that is the public domain. Various copies have floated around for years, making distributors a nice chunk of change, without a cent going to Romero.

So it might be easy to write off *Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated* as another cash-in on Romero's dime, but this works differently. Instead of making a straight retelling of the film in animated form, volunteer animators were urged to submit segments in any style, as long as it adhered to two rules: the footage must be in sync with the film's original soundtrack, and it must be in black and white. The result is a multi-faceted take on the original retold through mashed-up

footage, which switches from shot to shot. Much of the animation is commendable too, the manga-style arrival of the zombies in the cemetery, the luminescent ghoulies, the stop-motion Mege dolls, the use of still images and even the interlaced, saturated footage from the original film all look great. Its main downfall is that some of the pivotal scenes aren't given the best treatment, including some of the horrifying, gory events that go down in the basement. Here, it's played out with Barbie dolls, and

not in stop-motion either – you can see hands holding the legs. Also disappointing is the CGI-rendered climax. Still images would have worked so much better in those final shocking moments of '60s unease.

Despite the aforementioned setback, *Night of the Living Dead* utilizes the strength of the classic film's soundtrack to its benefit. The impact of the music, voices and shrieks – especially the echo-driven wails of a mother being attacked by her zombie child – are all amplified against the new visuals, especially when stills serve as ersatz storyboards. In the spirit of Creative Commons (the organization that oversees the licenses of works available for public retooling), *Night of the Living Dead* will be available for free download on [demonoid.com](http://demonoid.com), and available for purchase at cost from Wild Eye Pix.

ERIC VEILLETTE

## TWISTED SISTERS

### SORORITY ROW

Starring Briana Evigan, Leah Pipes and Rumer Willis  
Directed by Stewart Hendler  
Written by Josh Stolberg, Pete Goldfinger and Mark Roman  
E1

When I first saw one of the theatrical posters for *SorORITY ROW* – a crappy-looking design featuring six pouty young ladies placed in front of a burning house, looking as though they were posing for a magazine spread for the *Hills* or *Gossip Girl* (see inset) – I was a bit incensed. So, it was with some obvious trepidation that I sat down to watch this remake of the underated 1985 slasher gem. And to my utter horror, I actually...kind of...enjoyed it.

Taking the basic premise of the original – sorority sisters attempt to cover up an accidental death after a prank goes awry and they find themselves the target of a revenge-seeking killer – this version makes a number of key alterations, including changing the identity and appearance of the murderer. Here, the badie is a hooded figure brandishing a tricked-out fire iron with multiple sharp blade-gearing edges.

*SorORITY ROW* is reasonably entertaining and suspenseful, managing not only to feature the expected nudity but also some imaginative and gory murder



## OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE FUDGES THE NUMBERS

### 2 DUMB 4 WORDS

#### 5IVE GIRLS

Momentum Pictures

I hate movie titles that needlessly use numbers in place of letters. Though I can forgive David Fincher for *Se7en*, I draw the line at the likes of *7th/3rd* Ghosts and the new *5ive Girls*. The latter is a forgettable tale about school-girls with magical powers who are sequestered in a dormitory run by a sadistic headmistress with an evil agenda. Although it got my attention with its sexy strip scenes, spankings and naked bathtub wrestling, the babes' battle with a demon known as Legion left me limp, as you never actually see the body-jumping beast (possession = a deep voice and dumb grin). Ron "Hotboy" Perlman enjoyably munches scenery as a creepy priest, but if you're looking for a good magical, sexy schoolgirl movie, rent *The Craft*.

BODY COUNT: 8

BEST DEATH: Priest punched with flying crucifixes

### NOT GOING THE DISTANCE

#### 100 FEET

Exclusive Entertainment

Few things are worse than watching a movie with an original, imaginative premise that suffers from an appalling lack of directorial skill. In *100 Feet*, the always-stirring Famke Janssen (*X-Men*, *The Faculty*) plays a woman who returns home after serving time in jail for murdering her abusive husband. Under house arrest, she's got an electronic ankle bracelet, meaning if she leaves the premises, it's back to the Big House. The real problem, though, is that the house is

haunted by her husband's ghost, who's just as abusive in the afterlife. Regrettably, writer/director Eric Red (*Near Dark*) fails to take advantage of the film's unique storyline and claustrophobic setting, and settles on presenting the viewer with a half-assed spook story that makes *Ghost Dad* look like a friggin' masterpiece.

BODY COUNT: 2

BEST DEATH: Delivery boy beaten to death by a ghost

### HARDLY SUPER, DEFINITELY A NO

#### 2012: SUPERNOVA

The Asylum

There are at least 2012 reasons not to watch this movie. Number one: The Asylum already failed once in its attempt to cash in on the success of Roland Emmerich's blockbuster mega-hit *2012*, with the Christian crapfest *2012: Doomsday* (RMR93). Two: In this attempt, instead of a cool-ass Mayan apocalyptic prophecy, humanity faces a lame slowpoke from an exploding star that's going to wipe out Earth. Three: the performances are appalling, even by

Asylum standards. Four: It has several asinine subplots involving Iranian terrorists, a helibelly – and a ninja! Five: the repetitive, subpar CGI effects. Six: the body count is unforgivably low for a disaster movie. And seven: there's absolutely no nudity. Do you really need any more reasons to find another apocalypse?

BODY COUNT: 8

BEST DEATH: Motorists crushed by boulders

sequences, several of which are orally fixated. For instance, one nubile victim has a bottle of champagne shoved down, then broken inside, her throat, while another meets her doom by being shot in the mouth with a flare gun. Additionally, we get some pretty humorous moments courtesy of lead sorority sister and super-bitch Jessica (Leah Pipes, who sports sardonic one-liners and engages in an honest-to-goodness catfight) and the sorority's tough-talking housemother, Mrs. Crenshaw (Carmie Fisher).

An unadulterated cheesefest, *Sorority Row* is by no means a great film, but it's still miles ahead of shitty remake fare such as *Prom Night* and *Black Christmas*. Besides, any film that features a shotgun-toting Princess Leia who taunts a crazed killer with lines like "Come to mama!" and "Please don't think I'm afraid of you. I run a house with 50 crazy bitches!" is slight in my books.

JAMES BURRELL

### NEEDED: EXORCIST WITH TOW TRUCK

#### PHANTOM RACER

Starring Greg Evigan, Nicole Eggert and Brenna O'Brien

Directed by Terry Ingram

Written by Jason Bourque and Keith Shaw

R/R

The pecking order of car carnage cinema is abundantly clear: The *Car* has ruled supreme since 1977, followed closely by Steven Spielberg's *Duel*, John Carpenter's *Christine* and Peter Weir's *The Cars that Eat Paris*. Farther down, there's *Death Car* on the Freeway (though technically it's a van with a killer behind the wheel) and *Kill-doez* (though technically... oh, never mind). Now, allow me to introduce the new bottom-feeder.

*Phantom Racer* is a curious, wildly uneven amalgam of ghost story, action thriller and troubled-guy-confronts-his-past drama. Its tone constantly borders on sickly sweet even though many of the kid sequences involve truly over-the-top splatter, and while direction is competent and the cinematography often quite remarkable, some of the CGI effects are so laughable I found myself wishing I could watch it in a theatre just so I'd have an easier time.

Greg Evigan (yes, he of TV's *B.J.* and the Bear, uh, fame) plays an ex-stock car racer who hung up his flame-retardant coveralls years ago after a crash killed an opponent, who also just happened to be his off-track wal in a love triangle. One way-too-coincidental roadside breakdown later, our hero finds himself back in the small town where it all went down. Naturally, while he's sorting out baggage with the old love interest (Nicole Eggert) and looking home with her insufferably bratty teenage daughter (Brenna O'Brien), his former wal's melodramatic restored ride comes roaring back to life to waste the righteous and the wicked alike, in often spectacularly gory fashion.

Granted, most of the performances are solid – Evigan in particular is a better actor than I remember, and at 56 he scarcely seems to have aged at all. The script, however, is often painful, and while I can put up with a film that regurgitates channels *The Car*, the final sequence just goes way too deep into Christine territory for comfort. Still, it's not an entirely unpleasant little road trip. Does that mean I recommend it, even, marginally? I dunno, does "Hey Last Chance Lance, next time you've got 90 minutes to spare..." actually qualify as a recommendation?

JOHN W. BOWEN

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hood at the hands of his mother. As his reality starts breaking away, he experiences hallucinations. The whineabouts of a missing couple and the mysterious death of a young boy appear to share some link to him and his new digs, but the closer he looks, the quicker the truth seems to be slipping away.

Beautifully shot and edited, *Hidden* may be Norway's answer to the American remake of *The Ring* (2002), in that it successfully builds suspense, atmosphere and creep factor, but never owns up to any of the plot points it introduces. Had writer/director Pål Lie stuck to cohesive storytelling without the senseless red herrings, he may have found a much better movie would've emerged from its hiding place. **TT**



## KILL THEORY

Ah, the old kill-or-be-killed gimmick... In *Kill Theory* it's used when a mountain climber, who was once imprisoned for killing three of his friends to save himself during a climbing mishap, forces his past moral dilemma on an unsuspecting group of hot twentysomethings. The students' weekend-long graduation celebration – at the kind of lake house only frequented by college kids in horror movies – is barely underway before the mountaineer surfaces with a deadly proposition: If you run, you die, and if by dawn none but one person is still breathing, everybody dies. Essentially, off you peep or die with them.

And so, one by one, the fresh-faced babes and dreamy dudes take drinkups as they either test the patience of, or fall prey to, their exterminator tormenter and his litany of impossibly premeditated traps. As the morn'grows near, the males learn to outwit, outplay or outlast each other in an unlikely *Saw* meets *Survivor* scenario peppered with PG-13 death scenes. *Kill Theory* may have more twists than a naked dorm room pretzel, but in scares it never amounts to more than a deadly fiddle-fight. **TT**



## LAKE MUNGO

Few horror films are as polarizing as those built around P.O.V. shots and found footage. While the Australian thriller *Lake Mungo* certainly employs faux-documentary techniques found in movies such as *The Blair Witch Project*, it's much more layered and satisfying than its feathery predecessors.

Fifteen-year-old Alice (Toni Zuckar) drowns during a lakeside family picnic. A month after her body is found, photographs and videotapes lead her family to believe that Alice is haunting them. It's a familiar setup, but *Lake Mungo* is not what you expect. Eschewing cheap jump scares for rising tension, it's more *Picnic at Hanging Rock* than *Paranormal Activity*. The film offers a melancholy rumination on guilt, grief, fate, secrets and our universal fear of death, which leaves viewers with plenty of questions: While it never cries "Boo!" (Okay, maybe once or twice), the terror is still palpable.

It succeeds mainly because it feels authentic; the acting is so good you'll forget they're all faking it, and director Joel Anderson uses the right mix of photographs, video footage and re-created "interviews" to keep us questioning reality right 'til the end. **SP**



## THE REEDS

at least aren't grating enough to elicit any ill will on the viewer's part, and a terrifically hostile natural setting – but it never really takes off. In fact, it works better if you don't think of it as a horror film at all, but as more of a supernatural mystery with the occasional grisly death.

Things get off to a promising start when a half-dozen Londoners who have no idea how to pilot a water-going vessel set off for a weekend of boating in the Fens, a beautiful but treacherous stretch of marshland in rural England. It's all fun and games until somebody gets impaled, and the group realizes that they aren't alone in the stormy swamp.

*The Reeds* is competently made, with creepy atmosphere to spare, but it's also a fairly run-of-the-mill ghost story that never fully embraces its wealthy dramatic potential, like so much movie mozzarella. **AS**



## ZOMBIES OF MASS DESTRUCTION

more than just brains. In September 2003, the idyllic island town of Port Gamble, Washington is stricken by a viral attack that turns most of the community into frothing-at-the-mouth zombies. As usual, only a precious few dodge the undead's kiss, including an Iranian student-cum-suspected terrorist named Frida and Tom, a gay businessman who's returned home with his boyfriend in order to come out to his mother. After nearly 30 minutes of hokey ethnic and gay jokes, ZoMD finally gets to the meat when Frida's boyfriend's face is ripped off by a hungry horde. From there, your patience will be rewarded with some juicy special FX, including eyeball-biting, ripped-off heads and some righteous grass trimmer mutilation.

Tough the characters are closer to canchures, ZoMD saves itself from greater territory with occasionally clever humor and inventive maiming. Using a backdrop of post-9/11 paranoia, it pokes fun at the numb-skulled stereotypes which, even in the face of a populace-threatening infestation, are seemingly still strong enough to survive. **TT**

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flesh-eating disease do-over, or video game remake redux?  
It's Ti West vs. the House of Boll in...

# NIGHT OF THE UNNECESSARY SEQUELS!

## CABIN FEVER 2: SPRING FEVER

Starring Noah Segan, Geraldine Anderson and Marc Senter  
Directed by Ti West  
Written by Joshua Molkis, Randy Pearlstein and Ti West  
Lionsgate

Last year was a big one for director Ti West, who broke out as a genre star with his chilling '80s throwback *The House of the Devil*. Unfortunately, his 2010 follow-up is the delayed release *Cabin Fever 2*, which he has already publicly disowned because it was taken away from him during post-production. The final product's borderline incomprehensible, patchwork quality reeks of studio interference, and though there are enough scenes to suggest that West made a damn entertaining sequel before the producers took out their scissors, that's not enough to make this butchered edition worthwhile.

*Cabin Fever 2* opens with Rider Strong (the star of the original) being hit by a school bus and exploding over a title freeze-frame. His infected bits and pieces soon make it to a high school, prompting a new outbreak of the flesh-eating virus (see the effects pictured above) that gestates for quite a while before inconveniently surfacing on prom night. There are individual scenes and sequences implying it was all initially a metaphor for adolescent STDs, complete with disgusting mouth sores and private part pus. That's a clever way of expanding on the original concept, but unfortunately most of this material is overshadowed by cliché plot devices. The characters are lifeless, and considering they're played by horror stalwarts, such as *The Lost*'s Marc Senter, one can't help but assume that all the character development was left on the cutting room floor. On the plus side, Giuseppe Andrews' hilariously eccentric Deputy Winston survived and is once again the most entertaining part of the *Cabin Fever* experience.

There are moments to enjoy, but clunky editing and hackneyed storytelling are the dealbreakers. It's a shame that we'll probably never see West's director's cut for proof that he competently sent the story in a clever direction. Even the lazy Photoshop box art proves *Cabin Fever 2* is just geared to sell units based on brand recognition.

PHIL BROWN

## ALONE IN THE DARK II

Starring Bill Moseley, Jason Connery and Lance Henriksen  
Written and Directed by Michael Rancech and Peter Schoenher  
Vestron

Wow, to think that I actually believed Uwe Boll would be hard pressed to make a film worse than his 2005 schmeise-fest *Alone in the Dark*, but that crafty German has gone ahead and proven me wrong. And although he passed the directorial reins over to two guys with cinematic rap sheets that read like an Uwe Boll fan-club newsletter, he still sat in as producer, which means that this flick has Herr Boll's unmistakable stench all over it.

If you don't remember the first movie, don't worry about it because even though it was extremely loosely, sorta based on the video game of the same name, the sequel has even less to do with either of them! This time around there's no demon monster apocalypse about to destroy the world. Instead, there's an ancient witch who dresses up in a black cloak and mopes around for most of the film like a Cradle of Filth groupie. There's also a ragtag group of witch hunters, a magic dagger and maybe a sea monster or a spaceship or something—I'm not sure because the plotline was so boring and convoluted that by the time the end credits rolled I actually had no idea what the film had been about.

What I do remember, though, is solid performances by Bill Moseley (as the head witch hunter, pictured) and Lance Henriksen (as a former witch hunter), especially in a scene featuring a heated verbal battle between their two rival characters, which is easily the highlight of the entire film.

Although it was originally released direct to DVD in Europe in 2008, it's taken a couple of years for it to muster North American distribution, and for good reason. Also, it's rated PG-13 so be prepared for no sex or gore or anything even remotely scary or disturbing, except for the criminal misuse of genre vets such as Danny Trejo (*The Devil's Rejects*), Michael Paré (*Bloodrayne*) and P.J. Soles (*Halloween*). Best not watched alone, in the dark, or at all!

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## REISSUES



## RAY OF THE DEAD

## DAY OF THE DEAD (1985)

Starring Joe Pilato, Len Cardille and Tony Alexander  
Written and directed by George A. Romero  
Arrow Video

Jesus, Mary and Joseph! What better way to celebrate the 25th anniversary of George A. Romero's grim, claustrophobic zombie masterpiece than with this two-disc restored version of *Day of the Dead* on Blu-ray? Although this release originates from the UK, the good news is that it's region-free and should work in players the world over. Developed with the input of Cult Labs (cultlabs.com), a forum where fans can weigh in on the features of a film's release, this latest edition is almost the quintessential version of the film, which sees a small group of survivors living in an underground military bunker after the global zombie infestation. The new transfer isn't exactly flawless — there's still some squiggles during the opening credits that make it feel like you're watching on 35mm — but overall it's

pretty clean. Plus there's the new hi-def soundtrack from the "uncensored dialogue" version, making this the finest presentation of the classic to date. Unlike recent CGI-heavy features, in which the film's quality is compromised under the scrutinous eye of the 'ray (28 Weeks Later, Van Helsing), *Day of the Dead* flourishes under more careful inspection. Tom Savini's landmark makeup and FX are a skin-ripping revelation and Bub's minty green-skinned cheeks have never looked so pinchable.



Two all-new featurettes, including the 50-minute "Joe of the Dead," grant Joe Pilato (Rhodes) the chance to recount the germination of his most memorable lines, reveal intimate aspects of the grueling shoot and reflect upon the film's box-office belly flop. Then, walk a mile in his much-beloved shoes as "Travelogue of the Dead" follows him around fan conventions in Ireland and Scotland held last year. Also included are a 24-page comic, *Day of the Dead: Desertion*, specially commissioned for this release and featuring a Bub origin storyline; a lively, hilarious commentary by the FX team of Greg Nicotero,

Howard Berger, Everett Burrell and Mike Deak; a double-sided fold-out poster; four sleeve opens, including a *Night Dawn/Day of the Dead* poster; a thought-provoking essay by Calum Waddell, featuring new interviews with Romero, Savini, Pilato, actors Lori Cardille (Sarah) and Gary Kiar (Steel); and most of the extras from Anchor Bay's 2007 Blu-ray release, save for one glaring omission: the commentary track featuring Romero, Savini and Cardille. Now go choke on 'em!

TREVOR TUMINSKI

## SHEEN-ON-MACHINE ACTION

## THE WRAITH (1986)

Starring Charlie Sheen, Nick Cassavetes and Sherilyn Fenn  
Written and directed by Mike Marvin  
Lionsgate

Revenge is a dish best served at 90 mph, hurtling into an exploding building, according to the perennial 1980s video store favourite *The Wraith*. Starring a sleek Dodge Turbo Interceptor with an eerie spectral driver that would make K.I.T.T. drop his oil pan, the supernatural thriller is a stylized succession of car chases and fiery explosions that speeds along with brisk, comic book energy.

The movie's plot revs up when Ken's (Sherilyn Fenn) boyfriend is hauled off and killed by local gearhead Packard (Nick Cassavetes) and his greasy band of car-crazy punks. Packard then bullies the girl into submission, much to the puzzlement of the quiet new biker in town, Jake (Charlie Sheen). Jake's longing glances rub the violently possessive Packard the wrong way, but he's got bigger issues to contend with — one of his flunkies is found dead with his eyeballs missing, after drag racing a black Interceptor that seems to magically materialize on the backroads. As Packard begins to worry that the darkly clad driver is an avenging angel, the remaining gang members are also sent to their fiery fate.

None of this is particularly frightening, but *The Wraith* offers enough of a twist on *The Car* and *Duel* to succeed as brainless Saturday afternoon fun. It's not without problems, though. The tone is uneven and the obvious twist, that Jake and his alter ego killer wheelman are some ghostly incarnation of Ken's boyfriend, is revealed in a clunky flashback that only frustrates viewers by withholding a vital but obvious plot point.

But there's far more to pay attention to than the problematic story structure. Sheen may not get much screen time, but check out the quirky performances from Randy Quaid as the town's



hard-ass cop, and Clint Howard, doing his best Egon Spengler impression, as Packard's right-hand man. The film also has aged well as a 1980s period piece, with synthesizer strings, mohawks, blinding white jeans and an impressive soundtrack featuring Ozzy Osbourne, Billy Idol and Honeymoon Suite(!).

Lionsgate's new DVD soups up *The Wrath's* original 2002 release via interviews with Howard, director Mike Marvin and the film's stunt drivers. Marvin, in particular, provides candid insights about the film's inconsistencies. He needn't be so critical — despite some trouble under the hood, *The Wrath* is no lemon.

PAUL CORUPE

## KITCHEN SINK CINEMA

### BATTLE GIRL: THE LIVING DEAD IN TOKYO BAY (1992)

Starring Cute Suzuki, Kengo Otsuka and Kera Kikuo Hayase  
Directed by Kazuo "Gaira" Komizu  
Written by Hiroshi Matsuyama  
Synopsis

With a scant (read: merciful) running time of 74 minutes, this ultra low-budget zombie schlocker from Kazuo "Gaira" Komizu (*Entrails of a Virgin*) sees a meteoroid crashing into Tokyo Bay and covering the entire southern region of Japan with a noxious fog from outer space. Earthquakes and tsunamis follow, and Tokyo is plunged into a state of emergency. Soon, more chaos erupts as rogue gangs take over and it's every man for himself, with no one allowed to leave the contaminated city. And if all that isn't bad enough, the dead are returning to life! Apparently, a chemical reaction between the heavy metals from the meteorite created a kind of "cosmo-amphetamine" when combined with the nitrogen in the Earth's atmosphere. This fuses with human DNA to take control of the body immediately after brain death, creating a sort of flesh robot until the individual decomposes. (If they gave out awards for Best Scientific Gobbledeegook to Explain a Zombie Apocalypse, surely this would win!)



Now, on top of the zombies, natural disasters and gangland violence, there's also the mysterious Human Hunter military unit that the characters must contend with — an elite force hell-bent on decimating everyone in the security zone whether living or undead. It all seems pretty hopeless until Battle Girl arrives on the scene (played by popular Japanese wrestler Cute Suzuki). As a special agent of the Autonomous Security Unit, she's under orders to eliminate the ruthless military squad. With the help of her bulletproof, motorized battle suit (read: a black PVC fetish outfit and a set of oversized

sunglasses), and a trio of spiky-haired teens (appropriately named the Battle Kids), she decapitates zombies and goes head-to-head with the Human Hunters in some of the most ineptly staged (but hilarious) action set pieces these old eyes have ever seen.

Endless reams of expository dialogue punctuated by random bursts of goo-spattering ultra-violence later, Battle Girl uncovers a government conspiracy. Turns out, a corrupt military general plans to use the cosmo-amphetamine to create a super-race of Japanese warriors to kick the rest of the world's ungrateful ass!

With production values that would make cinematic shite-peddlers The Asylum blush, along with cheap-as-chips old school optical effects, *Battle Girl* isn't as much dumb fun as it wants to be (or as it sounds on paper), but you gotta love them for trying! (And hey, did I mention that it's only 74 minutes?)

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# CINEMA

VINTAGE HORROR REISSUES



## WE'RE GONNA NEED A BIGGER MAGNIFYING GLASS

### THEM! (1954)

Starring James Arness, Edmund Gwenn and Joan Weldon  
Directed by Gordon Douglas  
Written by Ted Sherdeman, Russell S. Hughes  
and George Worthing Yates  
Warner Brothers

A shell-shocked young girl wandering the New Mexico desert, the twisted remains of a trailer, an eerie droning noise and a biblical pronouncement: these are the stark, foreboding elements that set up the harrowing first reel of the pre-eminent giant bug movie of the 1950s. *Them!* introduced audiences to more than deadly, nuclear-mutated eight-foot ants. It also laid the groundwork for the evolution of the giant monster subgenre for the next decade.

Unlike Warner Brothers' creature feature hit from the previous year, *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, the studio's follow-up largely steered clear of the sympathetic monster that had generally defined the giant monster subgenre since King Kong's Empire State Building tryst went sour. Instead, *Them!* plays out more like a police procedural against an inscrutable enemy, as entomologist Dr. Bedford (Edmund Gwenn) and his

assistant/daughter Pat (Joan Weldon) team up with a square-jawed G-man Robert Graham (James Arness) and a cop (James Whitmore) to pull humanity out of the ant's deadly mandibles.

On arriving in New Mexico to study the scene of the aforementioned destroyed trailer, the scientists theorize that nuclear explosives tests have mutated the ants to unbelievable proportions. Through helicopter reconnaissance, the team discovers the ants' underground catacombs and launches an attack with flamethrowers and cyanide bombs—but not before two queen ants escape to start new colonies. The first lands on a ship at sea that is sunk by the navy, and Dr. Bedford traces the other to Los Angeles, where it has established a new subterranean nest in the city's sewer system. The army is dispatched to blast them into oblivion before the eggs hatch and the nightmare begins again.

Splashed against the anxieties over atomic power, *Them!* is a powerful, economically told anti-communist allegory in which America combines

strong scientific know-how and military might to outsmart and cull its enemies. Scenes of army jeeps mobilizing, radio rooms pulling headlines off teletype machines and, even an educational film-strip about the behaviour and ecology of ants help to ground the film in reality, and were widely copied by big studios and poverty row alike. Everything from *Tarantula* (1955), *The Deadly Mantis* (1957) and *Earth vs. the Spider* (1958) used similar detection-based plots and reinforced the fact that the good guys were well-equipped to tackle any threat, even in times of political uncertainty.

But none of that would matter if the film wasn't effective on a visceral level. And it is, from the desolate opening through to the discovery of the ant hill littered with picked-clean bones, including skulls and a human rib cage. But Gordon really flexes his skill behind the camera when the team heads down into the ant's tunnels to search for survivors amongst the hulking bodies of the dead creatures—there's a palpable dread in this sequence, from the dark, eerie calm of the motionless carcasses to the inevitable discovery of a few stray ants that must be torched. The climax in the LA sewer system is no less fraught with danger as the army attempts to wipe out the nest and save two children from the mammoth insects.

For everything it does right, *Them!*'s biggest liability is the portrayal of the colossal ants. Though the full-size mechanical insect models built for the film were nominated for an Oscar, they're hardly convincing. Douglas wisely keeps them under wraps for the first third of the movie and then covers them in shadows to hide their limited motion (the heads and antennae appear to move via a system of levers and pulleys). Still, they don't distract too much from the thrust of the plot, and were

more effective than, say, the grasshoppers crawling across photographs of buildings in Bert I. Gordon's *Beginning of the End* (1957).

*Them!*'s ant attack first got the digital home video treatment in 2002, but Warner gives it an encore performance as part of the attractive, four-film TCM Greatest Classic Films Collection: Sci-Fi Adventures. It's accompanied by *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* as well as the less essential 1950s programmers *World Without End* and *Satellite in the Sky*, which, when compared to *Them!*, will only

make viewers further appreciate Douglas' suspenseful and atmospheric work.

PAUL CORIPE





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# IT CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT



DRIVE-INS. DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

## WE THREE KINGS by John W. Bowen

**E**VEN THE MOST ARDENT STEPHEN KING FAN will attest that films based on his writing are a woefully inconsistent lot. Naturally, when the work of a single author is helmed by dozens of directors of ("ohmm") varying levels of talent and wildly divergent styles and philosophies, it's bound to be a crapshoot. But even with that in mind, King on film is a tough call, as the man himself will testify. We could all name a litany of dismal failures by best-forgotten hacks, but in fairness, even members of honor's royalty are more miss than hit with King's material. David Cronenberg and George A. Romero had only lukewarm results with *The Dead Zone* and *The Dark Half*, respectively, largely because the novels in question were ill-suited to the filmmakers' strengths. (That said, Romero fared better with *Grepsnow*, which King tailored specifically for him.) After brain-dead studio execs booted John Carpenter from *Firestarter*, he directed the just-far-to-middle! *Christine* and has since admitted that his heart simply wasn't in it. Our beloved Tobe Hooper has the atmospheric and still vastly underrated 1980 miniseries *Salem's Lot* on his résumé, but he's since counterbalanced it with pitchy *The Mangler*. Could the answer be for King to do the directing himself? Maximum *Overshine* would indicate not.

I recently got to naminatin' on three thoroughly worthwhile King films that fell through the cracks. Well, four, actually, but I already devoted a column (RM/79) to exonerating the unjustly maligned 2002 remake of *Carrie*, so I won't rehash that here. It's perhaps noteworthy that all three are post-1999, a period when cynicism about King adaptations ran high, and only one—*Desperation*—is by a "name" director.



### *The Night Flier* (1997)

I have a longstanding aversion to the painfully stylized, gothic-flick cliché that is the modern vampire film, but I've always enjoyed King's resolutely anti-romantic take on the archetype, and writer/director Mark Pavia brings that sensibility to the screen in this overlooked gem. "Never believe what you publish and never publish what you believe," is the mantra of tabloid reporter Richard Dees, played with sneering, bile-spitting relish



by Miguel Ferrer, in a performance that echoes the obnoxious pathologist he once portrayed on *Two Peaks*. While covering an ongoing series of murders at small town airstrips, Dees finds himself reluctantly beginning to believe his own story—that they're being committed by a vampire flying a Cessna. Pavia deftly balances the darkly satirical tone of the first two acts, in which tabloid journalism is not-so-subtly equated with vampirism, with a climax that can be described without hyperbole as truly nightmarish. Sorry ladies, this *SO* ain't *Twilight*!



### *Gotham Café* (2005)

It's pretty much impossible for even a low-budget King adaptation to qualify as truly obscure, but the seldom-seen short—based on "Lunch at the Gotham Café" from the 2003 collection *Everything's Eventual*—is about as close as it gets. This terse, violent thriller, in which a lunch meeting between a disintegrating couple and a divorce lawyer goes horribly wrong, frequently betrays its meagre budget, but still won well-deserved awards and critical raves on the festival circuit a few years ago. Watch for frequent King collaborator and *Masters of Horror* series creator Mick Garris as a priest, Apple Computer co-founder Steve Wozniak as an indie diner (billed in the credits as—wait for it—"Irate Diner") and, if you're really paying attention, a brief appearance by a certain best-selling author.

### *Desperation* (2006)

Garris' big success story is still *The Stand*, which surpassed *Roots* in 1994 as the most widely watched miniseries in TV history, but among Mr. Nice Guy filmmaker's lesser-known efforts is *Desperation*, which deserves considerably more attention than it's had. King's 1996 novel, about a group of strangers who run afoul of an evil entity in the Nevada desert, isn't among the author's strongest latter-day efforts, but the film's terrific ensemble cast clicks with the material, and Garris proves especially adept at keeping *Desperation* from looking and sounding too much like a TV movie. Not that he's entirely without reservations.



"I like *Desperation* a lot," he recently told me, "but being a godless heathen completely without religion, [I left] the biblical elements were a bit heavy. Also, Rae Perlman's Colie Entropian (pictured above) is such a wonderful villain, played with such gusto, that the film can't really regain all of its momentum once he's gone. It was a very tough one to shoot, but overall, I'm very happy with it."

Obviously, a number of other King adaptations have been spectacularly successful, and most of them (though not all) richly deserve that success, which is exactly why I've ignored them here. Now get the hell out of my basement before I get all Randall Flagg on your sorry ass. ☹



**WARNING: Contains Images Of Extreme Gore, Not For The Faint Hearted.**

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# BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

I don't envy those horror writers who decide to tackle often-trod ground in their work. Sure, including nefarious and wildly popular creatures such as vampires or werewolves may generate a certain amount of interest in your story, but on the flip side, you also run the risk of being pigeonholed within a specific sub-genre, driving some readers away.

For example, take *The Waking*, a new four-issue limited series (out now from Zenescope) featuring the king of the undead, the zombie. Undoubtedly, images are already forming in your mind: deserted and ruined city streets, a small band of survivors, hordes of flesh-eating corpses shuffling about, calling out for fresh brains. And while some of you are salivating for your latest living dead fix, others are sighing, "Zombies? Oh, brother, not again..."

As it happens, you're wrong in your assumptions. For starters, writer Raven Gregory decided to jettison the current Romero-inspired versions of the undead for a more classical interpretation of the creatures.

"*The Waking* harkens back to the way zombies were portrayed in the early days," he explains. "Instead of brain-eating beasts, these were creatures intent on revenge or controlled by some person with a deeper motive."

Furthermore, although the series contains zombies, the story isn't really about them. The tale begins with police investigating a pair of bizarre, seemingly unconnected murders. As events unfold, the prime suspect in one of the murders is viciously killed – apparently by the victim, who has risen from the dead. Soon, similar events are occurring throughout the city and the police anxiously try to put the pieces together before the fabric of their society unravels.

Meanwhile, a strange man has his young daughter chained up in their home, determined to keep her away from the chaos outside. It isn't long before the reader realizes that this odd pair holds the key to the strange series of events. From the very first issue, it's obvious that Gregory was going for more than your average zombie story.

"It's all well to entertain and tell a decent tale," he explains. "But if you can work in your own issues – and relate that human condition that breaks down the walls between reading and becoming immersed in a story – while walking the tightrope between horror and drama, then you might just create something that can really stand on its own."

Tolling in comics for over seven years now, Gregory began penning tales in 2003 with a creator-owned series called *The Gift*, published by Image Comics the following year.

He then wrote the first issue of the new *Seven* prequel series (based on the movie) before moving on to launch – and recently complete – the popular *Wonderland* trilogy for Zenescope.

For *The Waking*, Gregory called on his love of both horror and procedural cop shows to infuse the story with a great deal of genuine character moments. Dealing with themes ranging from loss and acceptance to morality, justice and revenge, he immersed his vision with the voodoo-style undead. It was important that the zombies served the narrative and weren't just included as a gruesome sidebar.

"For me, this kind of zombie just fit better with the noir aspects of the tale," he offers.



*The Waking* offers a new take on the well-worn zombie subgenre

"Beyond that, of course, is the deeper mystery behind the creatures coming back from the dead. Therein lies the true horror of the series."

The precise nature of that mystery is something readers will have to discover for themselves. Is Gregory worried that some might dismiss *The Waking* as just another zombie book?

"I try not to think about that kind of stuff when I'm writing," he says. "I write a story that entertains me with characters that hopefully feel real. Once it's done and out there, it's no longer in my hands. People will like it or they won't. Worrying if people are going to stay away because it's labelled as a 'zombie' book would drive me crazy if I over thought it."



**Strange things** have been happening in the Punisher's world. After being sliced to shreds by Dark Wolverine (don't ask), Frank Castle's remains were stitched together by Morbius the Living Vampire and transformed into a Frankenstein-like creature complete with built-in cybernetic weapons. Punisher #14 finds FrankenCastle living in the sewers and teaming up with the Legion of Monsters (including old favourites Man-Thing and Werewolf by Night) to thwart the nefarious plans of a band of monster killers. As bizarre as all this sounds, it actually works. While Punisher puns may have a hard time with the change, the rest of us can savour the over-the-top violence, hordes of monsters and the many nods to horror culture and history. It's only a matter of time before the title returns to the status quo, so enjoy the fun while you can.

**One of the things** I love about being a comics fan is picking up a title at random and immersing myself in a completely unknown, yet hopefully captivating, world. Sometimes unfamiliarity actually increases my enjoyment, while other times I have no idea what the hell is going on, such as in *The Astonishing Wolf-Man* #21. From what I could make out, there is a team of genetically manipulated humans that

includes werewolves, men with guns for arms and robot girls. And it looks like they're out to get the people who turned them into freaks. Apparently, the series comes to an end with issue #25 so this is probably not the best time to jump on board — this issue is certainly more preoccupied with tying up loose ends than starting new ones. I can't really fault the comic for not making sense to a new reader — certainly the writing and art come across as more than competent — but I warn other newbies to hunt down issues #1-20 before picking this one up.

### The tales of the Arabian

Nights mythology have lost some of their popularity over the last few years, which is a shame since there's plenty of excitement to be found in the mythology. The story of Aladdin is arguably the

most popular and forms the basis for this three-issue series, *Aladdin: Legacy of the Lost*. In the debut issue, Aladdin encounters the lamp and its notorious inhabitant for the first time, all while eluding the evil wizard Cassim, monstrous man-eating sand sharks and giant scorpions. The tale unfolds at a quick pace and strikes a nice balance between

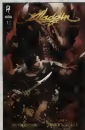
adventure and horror. Ian Edginton's Aladdin is more of the rogue than the classic, clean-cut hero, making his possession of an all-powerful genie ripe for dramatic potential. My only gripe is with the colouring, which tends to be a bit too dark, causing many of the night scenes to be difficult to make out. I'm all for mood, but it's also nice to see what you're reading.

**I have never seen** an episode of *Supernatural* so I'm judging this comic solely on what it contains within its pages. Taking place before the TV series, the story sees John Winchester and his two sons on the trail of a man he believes holds the key to the

brutal murder of his wife years earlier. Along the way they stumble upon evidence that more de-

monic forces may be at play. The comic does a good job of introducing the characters and the story to the uninitiated in an entertaining and intriguing manner, so foreknowledge of the series is not a requirement. I can't speak for the fans, however, since I'm not sure how much of this is brand new and how much is a retread, but for those with little to no knowledge of the series, *Supernatural: Beginning's End* is worth a look.

**A young, single woman** seeks out the 'busters when she believes her apartment is haunted by a malicious spirit, and soon finds herself smitten with one of the proton pack-slingers. No, *Ghostbusters*. *Jinxed Love* isn't an adaptation of the first movie, but a brand new tale. And while there are recurring themes, the thrusting of Winston into the limelight gives the story a refreshing spin. Not to mention, Naraghi does a good job of capturing each of the *Ghostbusters*' personalities without simply mimicking the actors' dialogue from the films. Strangely, though, the art bears little resemblance to the actors. Not sure if this was a conscious decision or perhaps some licensing issue, but it is somewhat distracting — although I'm sure Dan Aykroyd doesn't mind a full head of hair and a body that's at least 50 pounds lighter.



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### AMERICAN ZOMBIE GOTHIC: THE RISE AND FALL (AND RISE) OF THE WALKING DEAD IN POPULAR CULTURE

Kyle William Bishop  
McFarland

Over the past few years zombie fans have had no shortage of non-fiction to satiate their hunger for the walking dead, leaving little fresh meat on the cadaver of one of horror's most popular sub-genres. So kudos are rightfully in order for Kyle William Bishop's *American Zombie Gothic*, which manages to unearth some interesting new perspectives on the shambling hordes.

Bishop begins his book by pointing out that the walking dead are a relatively new addition to horror. While vampires and werewolves have centuries of mythology spanning continents behind them, zombies have links to only one culture: the Haitians and their voodoo religion. From there, he leads the reader through an examination of how zombies were first introduced to North American audiences (1932's *White Zombie*) and have continued to infest the silver screen ever since – with minor attention given to literature, comics and video games.

Admittedly, the bulk of the tome focuses on George A. Romero's output, with Bishop re-treading plenty of familiar ground (i.e. *Dawn of the Dead*'s none-too-subtle comments on consumerism), while also bringing new perspectives to these films. For instance, he examines how Romero uses specific camera angles to get audiences to connect with either his human protagonists or the undead antagonists, and

investigates how audience sympathy begins to shift in favour of the zombies in both *Day of the Dead* and *Land of the Dead*.

Like its subject matter, however, *American Zombie Gothic* is a tad sluggish. Bishop's nine-to-five role as an assistant professor at Southern Utah University is obvious, as his writing style often leans too far into unnecessary academia. Additionally, though the focus on Romero is natural, and films such as *I Walked with a Zombie*, *28 Days Later* and *Shaun of the Dead* are covered, more insight on typically less analyzed titles would have been welcomed.

These are minor complaints, however, as there's still enough fresh, branny insight within to encourage readers to re-examine their favourite films. And hey, what goes together better than zombies and brains?

W. BRICE MCVICAR

### FEATURES FROM THE BLACK LAGOON: THE FILM, ITS SEQUELS, THE SPINOFFS AND THE MEMORABILIA

D. DeAngelo  
McFarland

*Everything You Always Wanted to Know about the Gill Man But Were Afraid to Ask* might be an even better title for D. DeAngelo's tremendously thorough and detailed exposé of the classic Universal Studios monster trilogy. It's hard to argue with the book's billing as the "ultimate guide to the Creature," since it gleefully lays out every aspect of *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Re-*

venge of the Creature and *The Creature Walks Among Us*, from the development of the costume, to the use of 3-D and musical cues, to gossip behind-the-scenes anecdotes.

Coverage of the films makes up the bulk of the book, but *Features from the Black Lagoon* also does a fine job placing them in a context that extends beyond the Universal backlot. In addition to properly identifying Gill Man's place amongst his celluloid peers (*Dracula*, *The Wolf Man* and *The Mummy*), there's an informative discussion of the mythology of humanoid sea creatures that originally inspired the films.

Various Gill Man rip-offs and spin-offs are also covered, including 1959's *The Monster of Piedras Blancas* and 1987's *Monster Squad*. More interesting, however, is the discussion of the failed attempts to reboot the franchise, which were ultimately sunk by another creature of the deep, *Jaws*. Rounding out DeAngelo's tribute is a nice catalogue of desirable merchandise and memorabilia released over the last 60 years – who wouldn't want a *Creature from the Black Lagoon* beach towel or vintage board game?

The only quibble is that the author sometimes delves too deeply into tangential topics, such as the history of 3-D, or highlights trivia that would only matter to the most hardcore devotees, including a scene-by-scene breakdown of which actor or stuntman was in the suit at any given time. But this complaint is a minor one, since it's clear DeAngelo wanted to create the definitive work on these movies. And for the most part, he succeeds – if it's about the Gill Man, it's

# THE GRIM READER

## HOW TO SPEAK ZOMBIE: A GUIDE FOR THE LIVING

Steve Mockus

Chronicle

Most novelty books are one-joke wonders, and *How to Speak Zombie* is no different, only its joke is particularly good. Mimicking a children's book in which buttons are pressed to play unique sounds for each page, HSR offers ten different zombie vocalizations, as well as some clever blurbs about undead life and appropriately drippy illustrations. "B" is for "Braaaaaaainnnnn," and we guarantee you won't be able to press that button just once!



MONICA S. KUEHLER

## THE FREINZY WAY

Gregory Lamberson  
Motional

If living in New York City wasn't scary enough, imagine how bad it would be if it was teeming with bloodthirsty werewolves. That's the premise behind this menacing new police procedural that's absolutely thick with character development, intelligent dialogue and a remarkably fresh take on lycanthropes. It will have you double-checking your doors and windows on the next full moon.



LAST CHANCE LANGE

## STRANGE MAGIC

Gord Rollo  
Leisure

*Strange Magic*, the fourth novel from Gord Rollo (The Jigsaw Man), follows a dead magician who returns from the grave desperate to take revenge on the man responsible for his death—his stage partner. Mired with unbelievable character decisions and all-too-predictable plot twists, this action thriller trades a bit of gore for a whole lot of bore.



JESSA SOBCEK



Features from the book *Lagoon*  
Mistral F. HICK (and Sarah Mockus) are

almost certainly covered in this highly readable book that deserves a place of honour in any Universal horror fan's library.

PAUL CORUPE

## HALLOWEEN: NEW POEMS

Al Sarrantonio, ed.  
Cemetery Dance

From the ghastly greeting cards of yore to its morph into big business at Hallmark, Halloween has long inspired poetic sentiments. This anthology gathers original verse from some well-known horror and sci-fi writers—mostly masters of prose willing to ask the ridicule of being labelled poets in order to delight readers with new material about their favourite holiday.

The book sets out to explore the diversity of Halloween, from trick-or-treating and pumpkins to pagan celebrations and poltergeists. The tone is rather light and kid-friendly, rather than razor-blade scary. And the poetic forms are easily accessible for all readers. (Meaning: you get rhyming poems about ghosts rather than a litany of gore woven into sestinas.) The big selling feature is the first-ever poetry by author Joe R. Lansdale. In his six pieces, Lansdale proves himself perfectly suited to the task. From his playful "Got a Girl Named Billy Sue" to the violent "Observing Nature on Halloween Night" and the vampire riddle "Bat at the Glass," he exhibits a distinct voice, restraint with his words and a command of the slow reveal. Of the veteran poets, Tom Picicilli contributes two harrowing pieces about the pain of surviving the dead and dying—with no blood and guts required to unsettle the reader. There are more direct horror references in poems about Frankenstein's bride and Lovecraft's Yuggoth, but better are those which evoke the spectres of the season without having to drag out the clichés and lazy rhymes (night/bite, pain/raw), which are, sadly, all too plentiful here.

Editor Al Sarrantonio writes in his introduction that he hopes reading this will become a yearly ritual, a new Halloween tradition. It's certainly possible, but since I suspect the anthology will appeal much more to fans of Halloween than to serious poetry lovers, his audience might be a bit too busy at that time of year to bother curling up with a book. Good thing then that its best selections are haunting enough to be enjoyed year round.

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CHRISTOPHER MOORE'S **Bite Me**  
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KINGDOM WITH WACKY RESULTS.

# BLOODY HILARIOUS

BY MONICA S. KUTNER

**S**ATIRIST CHRISTOPHER MOORE WAS SPOOFING VAMPIRES LONG BEFORE THE TWILIGHT FILMS UNINTENTIONALLY TURNED MAKING FUN OF THE ROMANTIC UNDEAD INTO THE LATEST COMEDY TREND.

In fact, he began his popular vampire trilogy back in 1995 with *Bloodsucking Fiends: A Love Story*, a hilarious tale of involuntary vampirism that has horror firmly rooted in its weird heart. He returned to the trilogy in 2007 with *You Suck*; and now again with *Bite Me*, the final installment, which sheds more blood (and fur!) than the previous two entries combined.

Surprisingly, writing comedy was not the first choice for Moore.

"I started off thinking I would write horror stories," admits the 53-year-old author, whose influences range from Richard Matheson and Robert Bloch to Kurt Vonnegut, Tom Robbins and Douglas Adams. "I took my horror stories to a writers' conference and read them in workshops and people kept laughing at the way I turned a phrase. I thought, 'Well, evidently that's what I'm good at. I should probably go with that.' So from there I started writing funny stories with a supernatural bent."

In *Bloodsucking Fiends*, readers first meet protagonist Jedy shortly before she's bitten, drained and crammed beneath a San Francisco dumpster. She awakens over a day later with a sun-charred hand and a nasty case of vampirism. Since her sire has seemingly disappeared, she's stuck figuring out undead life on her own, at least until she meets lover/minor, Tommy, who's as interested in experimenting on her condition as serving her.

While Moore respects the genre and uses its tropes to inform his fiction—he's penned a dozen fantastical novels in seventeen years—he's also got some fresh takes on the tired old monster myths. For instance, while most

obvious, Charlene Harris' [Sookie Stackhouse] books show how a girl who is a virgin will have her hymen restored when she regenerates as a vampire, which I hadn't considered at all. It was sort of too late for me to go back and fix that, but upon reading about it, I had a huge 'd'oh!' moment."

Moore's latest novel (out now from William Morrow) sees vampirism jump the species barrier to cats, rats and birds, which provides for more unique joke fodder, as in the case of our feathery friends, which aren't intelligent enough to hide from dawn's light, so they burst into flames mid-air en masse. For Moore, turning to the animal kingdom was the next logical step for the series.

"I had my vampires feeding on a huge cat in the previous book, which they had to shelve to actually get to the cat part," says Moore. "So, I thought it would be cool if Chet the huge shaved cat got turned into a vampire and started turning other cats. As those things tend to happen, it kind of got out of hand."

Indeed it does, partially because Moore's bloodsuckers can turn to mist. And when the vampire cats do, they become a veritable rolling claw-filled fog. Of course, with vampirism now spreading on such a grand scale, gore and bloodshed are inevitable.

"Like sex, you really only want to describe [gore in] as much detail as serves the emotional effect you're trying to have on the reader," explains Moore of how he handles the squishy bits in his books. "With gore, it's a bit easier to get where you want to go: 'Grossed out?' Check! And gore isn't as funny as sex. There's a scene in *Bite Me* where the heroes are firing rats out of a Shop Vac and they're splattering against the wall, which I actually think is kind of funny, simply because it's another experiment gone awry, but in most cases, it's pretty hard to make gore funny."

Moore's books are not typically stocked in the horror section of bookstores, but that hasn't stopped fright fans from seeking them out and, for the most part, the author says their reactions have been positive.

"Horror fans get the conventions of horror, so they actually tend to get more of the jokes than someone who comes to my work out of the mainstream. I think everyone likes to feel as if they are in on a joke and horror fans get my stuff."



"You just have to spend some time thinking about it, which I did, but most people who don't do this for a living wouldn't," he explains. "Even in that, I missed some things that were glaringly

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *FOOL*



## IN THE CLOSET, UNDER THE BED

Lee Thomas  
Dark Scribe

One of the paradoxes of horror is that many of its central artists speak from the margins of mainstream culture, from where they are ideally placed to examine the experience of the outsider and of what the mainstream has historically considered outside the "norm." Lee Thomas' collection of short stories—nine previously unpublished and six that have already won acclaim elsewhere—places gay men and gay sexuality in the spotlight; the pieces here make up a vibrant, dark and grotesque study of repression, compulsion and fear.

Thomas' prose is an absolute delight, rich in imagery, precise and elegant. These stories are imbued with a ferocious sexuality—sex and violence are inseparable here, and sex invariably

has the power to destroy. Thomas not only plays with the horrors of what is "in the closet" (pun, of course, intended)—fear of exposure, fear of the unknown, fear of what we repress—but also uses monsters and the supernatural to explore the consequences of that repression. In "All

the Faces Change" a married father is forced to deal with the consequences of rejecting his first lover in high school; "Shelter" and "Down to Sleep" examine the predatory aspects of human sexuality and the fear of being consumed, and "Healer" is a Faustian tale about the lengths to which we will go to protect the people we love.

Thomas' eye for detail and gift for lyrical prose hits the mark every time; he controls the tension in his stories exquisitely, and the payoff, when it comes, is psychologically and physically brutal. He doesn't skimp on the gore, either; the punishment meted out to a confirmed child molester in "I'm Your Violence," for example, is absolutely eye-watering.

To pigeonhole the collection as "gay horror" would do it a disservice, since it risks alienating it from a mainstream audience; however, the fact that it focuses almost exclusively on gay male characters is significant since it gives voice to a group traditionally ignored by mainstream horror. Ultimately, *In the Closet, Under the Bed* is a brilliant, terrifying collection of stories that, like all the best horror, expands our knowledge—and our fears—about what it means to be human.

JULIETTE MARROWICK

## THE NEW DEAD: A ZOMBIE ANTHOLOGY

Christopher Golden, ed.  
St. Martin's

Before vampires recently threatened to retake their throne as the "it" beasts of mass-market horror, the living dead ruled the landscape, conquering the planet through film, literature and comics. Fast or slow, smart or dumb, fresh or pungent, it was a flesh-eater's world and we were the main course. Now, with an HBO adaptation of *The Walking Dead* comic in the works and this new zombie anthology, *The New Dead*, hitting bookstore shelves courtesy of editor Christopher Golden, it seems the relentless rotters may not be willing to give up their undead dominion just yet.

By all outward appearances *The New Dead* seems to take the task of satiating rabid zombiephiles. Max Brooks returns to the universe of *World War Z* with "Closure, LTD.," where survivors of the great zombie plague get the rare opportunity to say goodbye to the ones lost to it. David Wellington (author of *Monster Island*, *ARKASIS*) contributes "Weaponized," a tale of undead soldiers waging futuristic police action in Central Asia, which channels current NATO involvement in that troubled region to good effect. Joe Hill ingeniously uses the Twitter format to relate a ghastly tale of a family vacation gone awry in "Twittering from the Circus of the Dead," and Jonathan Maberry's moving "Family Business" demonstrates how treating the living dead with respect can heal the emotional wounds of those still breathing.

Unfortunately, the weaker entries stand out as much as the strong. While Joe R. Lansdale's chilling "Shooting Pool" doesn't feature zombies at all, it still manages to out-do some of the lesser efforts, such as Tim Lebbon's perfectly serviceable but ultimately undistinguished *28 Weeks Later* pastiche "In the Dust."

Ultimately, *The New Dead* stumbles in not deciding what type of zombie it's dealing with; some are slow, some aren't; some are mindless and some are all too intelligent. Had some basic ground rules above and beyond the broad zombie theme been pre-established, the collection could have been much more than simply the sum of its collective body parts—perhaps even comprising a deeper narrative. That approach might have made *The New Dead* an anthology for the ages rather than the worthwhile, if uneven, tome of lurking dread it is.

BRAD ABRAHAM

## LESSER DEMONS

Norman Partridge  
Subterranean

A powerful short story can certainly deliver the emotional depth of a novel in a matter of a dozen or so pages. While this is far from an easy task, Norman Partridge successfully crafts ten such shorts, each a complete world unto itself, in *Lesser Demons*. Already a well-established horror author, Partridge has penned six novels on top of an ever-growing number of short stories, so it's no surprise that his prose is polished. Instead of spending precious words on lengthy descriptions of characters and settings, he

drops the reader into the immediacy of the action, allowing the details to reveal themselves when necessary and the mystery and horror to unfold in a more natural way.

While the subject matter and narrative style vary from tale to tale, and include everything from supernatural ghost stories to crime thrillers, Partridge really shines when he is writing about monsters. In "The House Inside," the Sun's increased radioactivity kills almost all life on Earth, but somehow spiders and now-sentient toys are left behind to battle over the remains. By bringing the reader into the head of a spider before introducing the toys as the protagonists, the monster quickly gains a sympathetic edge, and as a result, the story really comes to life. Whether Partridge is tackling a gang of werewolves ("Road Dogs") or giant, radioactive humans ("The Big Man"), he manages to slip in and out of the differing perspectives with ease, and his use of internal monologue is smooth and well-practiced. Even when the monsters are from a familiar mythology, such as in his vampire tale "The Iron Dead," they are treated with a fresh eye—in this case he's given them a sci-fi spin.

Although the violence and gore can be explicit at times, the emotional balance is never tipped too far in one direction. The blood spits liberally across the pages, but the stories are arranged in such a manner that the reader never feels overwhelmed. Even if you normally shy away from short fiction collections, *Lesser Demons* is well worth a read, as each of these scintillating tales, despite their truncated lengths, provide a novel-sized wallop.

JESSA SOBZCZUK





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# TRAVELOGUE OF TERROR

THE ACCIDENTAL MUMMIES OF GUANAJUATO TRAVELLING EXHIBIT  
BY CHRIS JUREWICZ



**I**'M STANDING BEFORE A SET OF BLACK IRON GATES, LOOKING UP AT A ROW OF CONCRETE SKULLS. The gates and skulls are smaller than their Mexican counterparts, but I'm delighted to see them here in Detroit, Michigan, nonetheless.

The original gates stand outside the Panteón Municipal Santa Paula, a cemetery in Guanajuato, Mexico famous for its "accidental mummies," while these replicas guard the entrance to an unusual touring exhibit, currently housed at the Detroit Science Center. In Detroit, as in Guanajuato, the skulls promise a thrillingly morbid experience for all who dare enter.

The Panteón Municipal in Guanajuato is strikingly vibrant for a cemetery. The graves are so close together that they almost overlap. To accommodate

more corpses, the walls of the cemetery are lined with crypts stacked seven high.

But the Panteón Municipal is no ordinary cemetery, even by flamboyant Mexican standards. Yes, opulent monuments tower over simple hand-painted crosses, but the dead there do not all turn to bones and dust.

Beginning in 1865, cemetery workers started exhuming the bodies of

those whose families couldn't afford to pay the grave tax. Corpses interred for anywhere from a few years to several decades emerged from their crypts in varying states of preservation—some with skin, hair, fingernails and clothes remarkably intact (thus causing them to be coined "accidental mummies").

In total, 112 naturally preserved "accidental mummies" were discovered during the exhumations, approximately one percent of the total population of the disinterred. The mummies were collected in the catacombs beneath the cemetery, where the inaugural Museo de las Momias (Museum of the Mummies) opened in 1894. A modern museum, connected to the same site, draws half a million visitors each year. (See *RM#42* for an account of a visit.)

Now, for the first time, some of the mummies are appearing outside of Mexico, which is why I'm walking into a replica of a Mexican cemetery in an American science museum. Thirty-six corpses have been assembled into "The Accidental Mummies of Guanajuato," a touring exhibit that premiered in Detroit in late 2009, and will travel around North America for the next three years.

For this replica of Panteón Municipal Santa Paula, the crypts rise just five high, but the collection of flowers in aluminum cans and bright lettering on the graves evoke the vibrancy of the real cemetery. And unlike at the actual burial grounds, some of the crypts in the exhibit have see-through walls, allowing visitors to catch glimpses of real bodies in their not-so-eternal repose.

Peering in, I see that the mummies appear brittle, partly collapsed, with skin like thin, dirty leather and wisps of hair protruding from their heads. A nearby display, in which a replica skeleton lies atop a mound of take earth, provides an explanation of what typically happens after death. Most corpses begin a fairly rapid process of decay; body cells break down courtesy of their own enzymes, tissues liquefy, then bacteria and insects devour the putrefying mess.

As the mummies in the wall crypts illustrate, however, this normal process of decay halts in Guanajuato from time to time. The accidental mummies owe their preservation to nearly airtight burial chambers that kept them dry. Without adequate oxygen and moisture, the post-mortem feast never got underway,

Past the cemetery recreation, the next room offers 26 mummies, which stand or lie in glass cases. Some have information and names gleaned from burial records. Others bear pseudonyms and conjectures about what they did while alive.

All of the mummies have that same dusky, brittle skin. Some are almost as thin as skeletons, while others look like tallen cakes, their flabby breasts and torsos now wrinkly and hollow. Many of their mouths gape open, as if screaming silently. I have a hard time not seeing them as in pain. A woman who died in childbirth seems to hold the deflated folds of her belly together under crossed arms.

Gina, one of the museum's guides, tells me that she expected children would find the exhibit frightening, but in her experience only adult visitors have been visibly afraid, some of them even asking her to chaperone them through the displays.

The effect of seeing so many dead people—naked and dressed, young and old—together in the main room is unnerving and initially overwhelming. A middle-aged man looking at the mummies seems to be in denial.

"Are all these real people?" he asks anyone who may be listening. "They're all dead?"

"Don't look over here, Dad," says the man's daughter. "You're going to have nightmares."

The woman is warning her father about "Arturo," a mummified man who died in his twenties and was buried in a blue jacket with wide lapels. Hairs still poke from the nostrils of his shriveled nose, but the lower part of his face is missing, revealing a jaw with broken teeth. Arturo has no ears but his eyes have mummified; the popped orbs look as if they are staring out through a layer of dust.

Nearly five mummies of children are arranged in a circle in the centre of the room. Here, the exhibit remarkably balances the fascinating and the frightening, the edifying and the exploitative. Visitors learn how many children died of weaning diarrhea, a sickness that affected infants as they transitioned from breast milk to solid food. And that the corpses of babies were often dressed up as saints or angels for burial. In fact, the death of a child in 19th century Mexico was frequently celebrated, as it was believed that the souls of baptized children would enter heaven directly.



One of the infants on display, Magdalena Aguilar, died September 8, 1897, when she was just six months old. Her mummy still wears a baptism gown and tiny brown boots. Her hands are grasped as if in prayer. A note from her exhumation in 1909 reveals that her puffed-out cheeks are due to what was found within: "copious larva casings, likely from a beetle in the dermestid family."

For visitors who wish to learn more about the lives and deaths of those showcased in the exhibit, another room highlights the various scientific explorations conducted on the mummified bodies. Inside, three mummies lie amongst microscopes, endoscopes, tweezers and a replica CT scanner — the tools used by forensic investigators and medical imaging specialists. Reading the results of the tests presented here solves some mysteries introduced in other areas of the exhibit. For example, how did they know that Simón Lozano "may have earned a living for his family in the silver mines"? His hair samples contain iron, lead, tin, mercury and antimony, the presence of which suggests silver toxicity. For some mummies, X-rays reveal broken bones that have healed, testifying to lives of hard work, while CT scans of others uncover the signatures of degenerative diseases.

Even here the exhibit doesn't skip on the grotesque details of the indignities of death. Endoscopies of a mummy known as "Minero" (the miner) detected signs that "a scorpion had made its home at the base of his spine" sometime after his initial interment.

The exhibit ends with a small gift shop set up in a room dedicated to showing how Mexicans embrace not only the mummies, but the dead in general as part of their popular culture and belief system.

Among the pictures of colourful Day of the Dead celebrations, a movie poster stands out: three masked wrestlers face off against living corpses in *Las Momias de Guanajuato*, a lucha libre movie from 1972. I experience a frisson of excitement from seeing how the Mexicans find fun amidst the horror of death — a fitting end to an enthralling exhibit. It also makes me re-evaluate a quote used at the beginning of the show: "Don't be afraid, they are only cocoons. The butterflies have flown away." What a treat to realize that we can still recapture those butterflies, and learn about their lives more than 100 years after they departed this mortal coil.

The *Accidental Mummies* exhibit runs at the Detroit Science Center through April 11, 2010. Admission is \$24.95 USD for adults, \$22.95 USD for seniors and \$19.95 USD for children. Six other stops are planned in North America through 2012. The exhibit is expected to move to Navy Pier, Chicago next, with more cities to be announced. More info at [accidentalmummies.com](http://accidentalmummies.com)



The *Dead Talk* (clockwise from top) Mexico's *Accidental Mummies* are displayed in glass cases along with descriptions of who they were and what they did in life: six-month-old Magdalena Aguilar was buried in her baptism gown (an example of the "lucha libre" look common among the dead); the exhibit entrance in Detroit; and (opposite) a typical *Accidental Mummy*.

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# THE GORE-MET

WEEKEND GORE-MET TURNS BLU OVER *THE TOOLBOX MURDERS*.

**B**LU-RAY KIDNAPS ME: As an obsessive-compulsive collector who amassed an excessive amount of VHS tapes, then an even more obscene number of DVDs, I am wary — and weary — of being hooked into buying the same damned films all over again. In my often absurd quest to have the ultimate home video version, I've even upgraded some titles several times within the same format, so I wasn't particularly keen to go this route again. At some point, you have to say, "enough is enough."

Certainly the HD DVD/Blu-ray format war just two years ago did little to bolster my enthusiasm; the quick obsolescence of HD DVD scared my wallet shut. But with a hi-def TV not being properly utilized, the threat of irrelevance in these pages, and the affordability of Blu-ray players and media, it was time to overcome my reluctance.

This isn't quite the revelatory home video upgrade that DVD was; the devil here is in the detail. High-definition DVD was the more accurate descriptor, as these are shiny little discs with incredible image resolution. But not every film automatically looks better under the level of scrutiny this affords.

More than with any previous format, the type of equipment and film stock used is critical to the final result. Big-budget studio pictures obviously benefit the most — the recent James Bond films are stunning, for example — but the low-budget cult movies that are my passion do not always fare as well. I grabbed a handful of essential favorites to mixed results.

The *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1986), both shot on 16mm, are not well-served in high definition. It's the small things revealed in the accurate detail that strip away some of the magic, like the glisten of the makeup used for the port wine stain on the face of Ed Neal's Hitchhiker character, which is not apparent on the DVD. On the other hand, films shot on 35mm, such as *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and *Halloween* (1978), are worth the upgrade.

Four years after the introduction of DVD, you couldn't keep up with the number of titles being released in that format. Four years after the intro-



duction of Blu-ray, the list of available titles is depressingly small. Thankfully, one recent offering from Blue Underground, Dennis O'Donnelly's sleazy proto-slasher *The Toolbox Murders* (1978), fills me with hope that more obscure genre classics will receive the hi-def treatment.

The first half-hour of the film is gory exploitation gold. A masked maintenance man stalks the residents of an apartment complex, killing a selection of single women with implements from his toolbox. One is dispatched with a drill, another takes a claw hammer to the skull, a third is perforated with a screwdriver and, in the most notorious sequence, the killer interrupts a pretty lady (Marianne Walter) masturbating in the bath and chases her around the apartment with a nail gun before firing it into her forehead. These sequences were shot at night and in low interior light, and on Blu-ray, the rich blacks and sharp contrasts are striking.

The crazed killer (Cameron Mitchell) is obvious from the beginning, but isn't revealed as the building superintendent until after his opening killing spree. Dependent on the death of his daughter, which is clumsily laid out in the opening credit sequence, he kidnaps Laurie (Pamelyn Ferdin), the

daughter of a tenant (Aneta Corsaut), as a replacement. The film slows down in the middle as a befuddled cop (Tim Donnelly) and Laurie's brother (Nicolas Beauvy) look for her, while her mother frets, but it picks back up for the decidedly demented climax. Unfortunately, we don't learn anything new about the film on the Blu-ray, as the special features are carried over from the DVD release and presented in standard def.

The appeal of *The Toolbox Murders* might be lost on people who didn't grow up in the '70s or aren't diehard slasher fanatics. Pamelyn Ferdin was the quintessential girl-next-door who appeared in a lot of television productions of the day. Aneta Corsaut had a long run as Andy's girlfriend in *The Andy Griffith Show* and Tim Donnelly had been a firefighter in *Emergency!*, two series that were in heavy reruns at the time. The look of the killer and the murders themselves were torn from the pages of true crime rags such as *True Detective*, which then had prominent spots on newstands.

This one didn't escape the remake trend of the last decade, but *Tobe Hooper's* 2004 do-over, starring Angela Bettis, has been unfairly maligned. A belated sequel is supposedly in production, *78K: The Toolbox Murders*, promising Lance Henriksen, Jeffrey Combs and more gore!



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*—Robert Hood: Undead Backbrain*

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## THE ENTITY

Charles Bernstein

INTRADA SPECIAL COLLECTION

Charles Bernstein's big break came with the 1981 release of this brutal tale of a mother repeatedly raped by malevolent spirits. His composition is comprised of three components — impassioned, humanistic music for the heroine, a stalking motif and the rape music — and part of the film's continuing ability to terrify lies in this roughly half hour-long score. Each track is derived from one theme, but Bernstein plays with specific shades, such as the orchestral lament in "Carts" (woodwinds and tragic strings) and eerie, undulating, high-pitched synth chords that precede the supernatural assaults in "Bath/Attack." Bernstein switches to a compression of bass hits and rippling sounds that collectively mimic the mechanical thrusts of an entity never seen in the film. Both composer and director were interviewed for the extensive liner notes for Intrada's release (limited to 1200 copies), and cues have been re-sequenced to balance out the score's traumatic flow. **MRH** ★★★★★



## THE DESCENT: PART 2

David Julyan

MOVIESCORE MEDIA

Despite being an unnecessary sequel, *The Descent: Part 2* gives David Julyan an opportunity to return to the slimy world of feral humans. He does so with a large orchestra and

inventive electronic sounds, revisiting that gorgeous melancholic theme for proud heroine Sarah. Much of the score's first half consists of somber, atmospheric tones and tape, and a brassy undercurrent that hypnotizes the listener into an unnerved state before the fitful of piercing sonic assaults. Those early attack stabs are brief, which is a signal character deaths are perfunctory, but the score remains intriguing in the way the cues evoke apprehension, an adrenaline rush, false safety, and a sudden swarming of teeth and claws. Dense percussion and weird brass clusters dominate the album's finale, but what's missing in *Part 2* are the bleak yet sincere character observations which made *Part 1* such a powerful statement on human tragedy. **MRH** ★★★★★



## SILENT NIGHT, BLOODY NIGHT

Gershon Kingsley

HOWLIN' WOLF RECORDS

Composer and Moog pioneer Gershon Kingsley only had a fleeting film scoring career in the early '70s, but his orchestral music for this 1974 nascent holiday slasher is a stunner. Building the score around the perennial Christmas classic "Silent Night," Kingsley reconfigures aspects of the song into tragic, abrasive and sometimes laughably mordant variations; his sweeping use of strings, gentle piano and the counterbalance of lyricism and dissonance recalls John Williams' *Dracula* score. But *Silent Night* is distinguished by tight intimacy, as well as emotionally wrenching harmonies that manage to soften the album's occasionally abrupt edits. The mostly mono cues have been assembled into two dramatically satisfying suites, and the booklet includes concise info on the film, the composer and this lost gem of a

score that's an ideal antidote to the usual treacly holiday cheer. **MRH** ★★★★★



## THE CALLER

Richard Band

INTRADA SPECIAL COLLECTION

One of Richard Band's best scores is rescued from oblivion by Intrada in this CD release, albeit limited to 1000 copies. With his flawless use of orchestra and electronics, Band largely eschews his sometimes overt penchant for imitating Goldsmithian stylings for this clever puzzle film where two mysterious characters engage in verbal sparring matches and suspicious behaviour. That ongoing conflict is supported by a score rooted in mercurial contrasts, starting with a dreamy main theme in the eight-minute-long "Main Title" cue and continuing with a wonderfully plaintive composition ("No More Questions") that's filled with tension and desperation. Band repeatedly drifts from gentle woodland passages to

mysterious string motifs with unresolved chords, as well as metallic shimmering and water chime emulations that foreshadow the sleazy, synthetic percussion in "Melt Down." The low-key musical drama of *The Caller* (1967) demonstrates Band's adeptness at channeling a two-character study in deceit and desperation. **MRH** ★★★★★



## CALABRESE

III — They Call Us Death

SPOOKSHOW RECORDS

Like a phoenix rising from, well, Phoenix, Bobby, Jimmy and Davey Calabrese return with a third heaping helping of hard rock horror tunes lyrically lined in blood. On *They Call Us Death*, the brothers sang songs of demonic desire ("Near Twilight"), werewolf existentialism ("Blood of the Wolf") and satanic entropy ("Violet Hellfire"), but sadly there's no one standout, teeth-shattering anthem, such as "Midnight Spookshow" or "Voices of the Dead," from their first

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## NEKRASOV/AERLATING

Split LP

Cinecore Lizard Records

It's not often we review an album that is literally scary, but this split LP from Australian noise artist Nekrasov and Dutch drones Aerlating certainly qualifies. Nekrasov's contribution — a staggering 24-minute soundscape rife with dark atmosphere and heavy synth — sounds absolutely massive, summoning images of a dying planet or a descent into the deep pits of hell. Not to be outdone, Aerlating's three tracks of dissonance offer very little from Nekrasov's noise attack, but do offer harsher, more morose effects. Late title aside, first track "Dog Seren" is the most frightening thing on the album and the only piece that approaches actual "music," with its smashed cymbals and tortured screams. Obviously an entire album worth of noise is not for everyone (and that's likely why this translucent green with silver splatter vinyl is limited to 300 copies) but if you're searching these pages for something that might actually freak you out, you could do worse than this. **AVL** ★★★★★

# the BLOOD SPATTERED GUIDE

## CHARLES BERNSTEIN ON FINDING FREDDY

"Welcome to my nightmare"

ALICE COOPER

Any movie monster can have his own collectible figurine, but it's a small gang who have their own, immediately recognizable theme song. If Freddy Krueger has endured as an icon of horror cinema, part of that legacy is thanks to the creepy music playing when most of us first met him in 1984's original *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. That sinister synth theme was written by veteran composer Charles Bernstein (*The Entity*, *Love at First Bite*, *Cujo*), who recently took a moment out of his Oscar weekend to describe how his score was born.

When Bernstein first met with director Wes Craven to talk about his upcoming film, he recalls, "It looked like one of those little pictures that might not do too well. I wasn't that savvy about the market so I saw this guy with razorblade fingernails and thought, 'That's kind of out there. It's never going to catch on with the general public.' But I really liked Wes and it seemed [like] an opportunity to do some fun music."

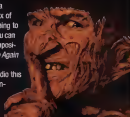
Bernstein also says that *Nightmare's* concept reminded him of his favorite film, Federico Fellini's *8 1/2*, and he was keen to compose for a film that similarly explores the divides between the dream world and waking world.

"It intrigued me that music could play a role in elucidating the movement between the inner and outer reality," he explains.

Partway through writing the score he realized what he needed was a main theme. "Usually in horror you just write scary motifs, but I wanted to write a melody that would sum up the flavour of the thing. ... Freddy is a one-of-a-kind, his attitude is so unique amongst film monsters. But the fact that there's a theme was a secondary thought, not my first impulse."

Like so many classic '80s scores, the original *Nightmare* CD has long been out of print. In its absence, Bernstein recommends the 2006 DVD re-release, which features a "superb" 5.1 surround remix of the score. While he had nothing to do with any of the sequels, you can hear some of his original compositions in the new *Never Sleep Again* documentary (see p. 21).

Tune in to Rue Morgue Radio this month for more from my conversation with Charles Bernstein about making monster music.



**SOUND BITE:** Actor/singer Bill "Chop Top" Moseley has a new musical project called Spider Mountain, with Rami Sharone of Stolen Babies/Puscifer. Sample the freaky, funky rock record *No Chopdays* from [chopdaysbbq.com](http://chopdaysbbq.com), [myspace.com/epino](http://myspace.com/epino), or order an autographed CD from [chopdaysbbq.com](http://chopdaysbbq.com).

LISA LADIGER

two full-lengths (*13 Halloweens* and *The Traveling Vampire Show*). There are, however, twelve ultra-aggressive, kinda catchy tunes and some groovy, ghoulish artwork. If *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors* and *Halloween II: Season of the Witch* taught us anything, it's that part three never really lives up to the franchise billing. That said, we still eagerly await *Calabrese IV—Brooklyn in Space!* TD **B+ B**



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Scouting the Boneyard  
METAL BLADE

It's not that they lack the metal spirit; this album is unrelentingly fast, heavy and, at a mere 31 minutes, concise. It's not that they lack talent, vocalist Joe Sinacuse has a formidable blackened rasp, guitar tandem Tony Lorenzo and Karl Kirsch have their *In Flames* schick down pat, and bassist Rob Steinwandel and drummer Alex Chambers provide an appropriate rumble and bash. It's that, no matter how much they eschew breakdowns, keyboards and clean vocals, the band's sound is still firmly rooted in metalcore, a trend that *Can't Die Fast Enough*. The weakened lyrics try to be provocative yet inoffensive, notably in the passive-aggressive rhytm-rhym of religion-basher "Welcome to the World" ("Your god is not coming back") and the title track, a limp ode to necrophilia ("I spray her with perfume, to help mask the smell"). Breathe deeply of the rot and fuck the Christ, that's metal! GM **B+**



### DISFIGURED DEAD

Visions of Death  
HELL'S HEADGAMES

While it's virtually impossible to reimagine the wheel that is gore-obsessed grindcore, occasionally a band will come along that manages to make it run with a little more steam. Newbie New York-

based the Disfigured Dead happens to be one of those bands. Combining the ghoulish grind, blast beats and ravenous screams of Napalm Death with thrash's scorching, destructive guitar riffs and the sordid vocal delivery/shrieked subject matter, Cannibal Corpse helped bring into vogue, *Visions of Death* is a vicious onslaught of extremity. Simple yet effective tracks such as "Scramatorium," "Merely Murdered" and "They Hear Your Heart Beating" provide this genre with what the succession of *Return of the Living Dead* films offered fright flicks, borderline hilarity bolstered by disgust and wonderfully overbearing schlock. KC **B+**



### THE BEAST OF THE APOCALYPSE

A Voice from the Four Horns of the Golden Altar

TRANSCENDENTAL CREATIONS

You find yourself walking down the most ornate, regal hallway only to fall through a trapdoor into a black pit of infinite despair—welcome to the domain of The Beast of the Apocalypse. A duo hailing from the Netherlands, TBoA expels occult-influenced black metal and decorates it with chamber organs and ceremonial synths for a perfectly terrifying balance of devil-defeating compositions and ethereal thinnings fit for a more primitive, mystical dimension. Divided into six acts, this debut's rot-like bass guitar is sure to flie down any rough edges on your internal organs—particularly on "Hypostasis of the Archons," as it flirts with the mystical "brown note" at least once or twice. And though the indiscernible vocals are buried in the murk (even by black or death metal standards), there's a lo-fi charm as the two Dutchmen channel demons and spit their essence through a layer of otherworldly white noise. TT **B+**





ITALIAN METALCORE OUTFIT **STIGMA** DELIVERS TEN TRACKS OF EC COMICS TERROR ON *CONCERTO FOR THE UNDEAD*

# TALES FROM THE



BY AARON VON LUPTON

**W**HILE THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF EXTREME METAL BANDS DEDICATED TO THE HORROR GENRE, THE SAME CANNOT BE SAID ABOUT THE HARDCORE SCENE. With lyrics typically spanning topics such as veganism, personal struggles and tough-guy political rants, one of the few things that everyone in hardcore can agree upon is that it's an unlikely place to find lyrics that embrace the fantastic. Enter Italy's Stigma, a metalcore outfit that incorporates the expected double-kick drums, crushing breakdowns and gang vocals into completely unexpected tongue-in-cheek tales of terror.

"The fact that we are explicit in saying we like horror stuff is a plus for us," explains vocalist Stefano "Vlad" Ghersi, "because there are people that come to see us just for the music and don't care about what we are singing about, and then there are others that come because they know we are into horror. [Fans] come up to us after the show to ask us about the lyrics and stories and ask what we think about this movie or the other, so it's more interactive."

Taking their name from legendary Agnostic Front guitarist Vinnie Stigma, the Italian quartet offered up its first lesson in horror with 2007's *When Midnight Strikes*, an album dedicated to the Universal monsters, featuring songs such as "I Am Dracula," "Blood, Your Precious Blood!" and "Silver Bullets and Burning Candles" pledging their allegiance to the dark side. Now, the band returns with sophomore effort *Concerto for the Undead* (available May 4 from Pivotal Recordings), with the legendary EC Comics of the 1950s serving as the theme.

Admittedly, Stigma's heightened technicality and chaotic guitar riffs make for odd bedfellows with the Old Witch and the Crypt-Keeper, especially in place of hardcore's usual straight-edge distorbs and '90s politics but, according to Vlad, it just wouldn't be right to replace their modern hardcore musical approach with the more expected horror metal sound.

"We don't want to be a band that talks about horror stuff and super-serious insane things," explains the singer. "[Vlad] we are not the typical brutal death metal band that talks about spitter things as though they are real. It's just a way for us

to talk about things we love, but not in a serious way. So the *Tales from the Crypt* thing was perfect because those comics are really grotesque and they speak about horror, but with a more funny approach. It fits perfectly into the manifesto of Stigma."

After picking out their favourite stories from Vlad's personal EC collection, the members began finding suitable riffs to go with each one, eventually penning ten odes to the beloved series. They even attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to get permission from EC to use the original story names as song titles. (Vlad believes that EC devotees will still recognize each tale based on the lyrics.) For instance, the track "3000 Years and Still Keeping It Real" is based on the ancient Egypt-themed "This Wraps It Up!" (from *Tales from the Crypt* #35), and even the album's title, *Concerto for the Undead*, references the story "Werewolf Concerto" (from *Wolf of Horror* #16), about a violin player who discovers his maestro is a lycanthrope.

Further fleshing out the concept is some stunning comic book artwork courtesy of Andrea Berton of Core-Ilio Design, with liner notes lending each song its own comic box in tribute to the cult series' droopy, rotting style of illustration.

To promote *Concerto*, Stigma has a European tour lined up but, as of now, there are no plans to bring their horrorcore to North America, which is ironic considering Stigma's thematic influences have so far been rooted in American pop culture. Vlad maintains, however, that the band is also very much inspired by its homeland's horror industry.

"I've been a horror fan since I was about thirteen," he says. "I had a friend who was older than me who was really into horror, and not the '90s stuff like *Scream*, but more like Dario Argento's really old movies. ... Whenever our bass player was asked what his favourite movie was, he always said *Cannibal Holocaust*, which is funny because that movie is so heavy. So, yeah, we are really into the Italian stuff and we have talked about doing an Italian horror concept. It could be the next record."

As the Cryptkeeper would say, pleasant screams! 



# PLAY DEAD

GRAPHICS ▲

PLAYABILITY ▲

SHIVERS ▲

GAMES REVIEWED BY ANDREW LEE  
HIGHEST RATING IS THREE



## CALLING

Wii  
Madison  
Wii

▲▲▲  
▲▲  
▲▲

Your cellphone is ringing but I wouldn't answer it if I were you, because the person on the other end isn't a person at all. It's a ghost, and it's coming to get you!

Available exclusively for Wii, *Calling* begins with a back story about a web-site called The Black Page, which lures people into a chat room where they get

sucked into The Mnemonic Abyss, a frightening realm that lies between our world and the afterlife. Armed with only a flashlight and a cellphone, players choose one of four characters and attempt to escape the Abyss by moving through its dark backdrop of dilapidated houses, hospitals and schools. The characters: Rin, a sexy college student desperately looking for a girl she met online who has disappeared; Shin, a high school student who's always on the prowl for anything dealing with the occult; Chiyo, an elderly grandmother who's been surfing the web in an attempt to hook-up with her dead husband; and Makoto, a magazine editor investigating his business colleagues' untimely demise.

The brooding atmosphere of *Calling*'s moldering, rundown environments is reminiscent of those found in the *Fatal Frame* and *Silent Hill* series, but the fact that players utilize controls that mimic a real flashlight and cellphone to examine items, retrieve clues and try to avoid confrontations with menacing spirits helps make gameplay both deeply immersive and totally terrifying.

Don't be surprised if after playing you find yourself shutting off your cellphone and turning on all the lights.



## HEAVY RAIN

Quantic Dream  
PS3

▲▲▲  
▲▲  
▲▲

The Origami Killer has struck again! And no, that doesn't mean that someone's murdering people with paper cranes. The Killer earned that disturbing moniker due to the folded paper animals that are always left next to the victims' bodies.

Over the course of this dark mystery-adventure game, players inhabit a variety of characters, including a retired detective, an FBI agent, a female photojournalist and a father trying to rescue his abducted son. *Heavy Rain* plays out like an interactive movie where you guide the storyline by choosing actions from a series of prompts that appear on the screen. For instance, you might decide to kill a drug dealer or let him go, or cut off part of your finger in order to gain a clue, or chicken out and forego the lead.

Though the game starts off slowly and sometimes suffers from wonky controls, the photo-realistic settings, lifelike characters and gripping storyline will keep you on the edge of your seat right up until the final reveal.



## BIOSHOCK 2

2K Games  
PC, PS3, Xbox 360

▲▲▲  
▲▲  
▲▲

You'd better grab your wetsuit because it's time to return to the ruined underwater city of Rapture to battle more Splicers, Big Daddies, Little Sisters and a host of other genetically modified monsters intent on having your DNA for dinner. Although it sounds a lot like the original, this time around you're a Big Daddy too.

Set eight years after the events of *Bioshock*, the game sees players navigating as one of the giant armored behemoths, on a quest to find a specific Little Sister (crispy-ass girls who extract and consume genetic material from the dead), then overthrow Rapture's fanatical new leader before she destroys the entire city.

Armed with everything from a nailgun to a grenade launcher, players traverse the city's decayed environments while being subjected to random attacks and a soundscape rife with the screams of mutated monsters, the cries of children and the clanging footsteps of approaching abominations.

Take a deep breath and dive in!



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# CLASSIC CUT

## MEN, WOMEN, AND CHAIN SAWS: GENDER IN THE MODERN HORROR FILM

CAROL J. CLOVER USA - 1992



**I**f you've ever dropped the words "final girl" when talking about slasher movies, you're standing on the shoulders of film theorist Carol J. Clover. Her 1992 feminist defense of modern horror, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws* is one of the most important academic contributions to the development of the horror genre, and her conceptualization of the "final girl" has helped to radically rethink the workings of gender in this area.

While some dismiss academic scholarship for being too highbrow or abstract, some scholarly writing has produced new ways of understanding the genre. Clover's book is a definitive example of this, literally transforming the way we understand gender, "the male gaze," sadism, masochism, and the female victim-hero in horror — and in the slasher subgenre more specifically.

Clover's innovative ideas need to be considered within the development of psychoanalytic film theory in general. Going back for a moment, the horror genre really only began to attain legitimacy in the hallowed halls of academia after Robin Wood, Richard Lippe and Tony Williams' 1979 landmark study "American Nightmares: Essays on the Horror Film." The impact of psychoanalysis on film theory in the 1970s had important repercussions for horror. Psychoanalytic theory turned to the genre quite naturally, because of its obvious fascination with themes such as the unconscious, dreams and nightmares, and the repression of unspokeable desires.

At the forefront of the practice was the work being done by feminist scholars. Laura Mulvey's important study of the male gaze, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), laid the groundwork for a mainstream feminist critique of the horror genre. In her analysis, Mulvey insisted that classical Hollywood cinema reflected the patriarchal order by putting the viewer in the position of the active male voyeur who looks at a passive woman as an object of desire. The classic example of this is in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), in which Norman (Anthony Perkins) watches Marion (Janet Leigh) through a peephole in the wall of her hotel room (above left). In this voyeuristic act, Norman is actively looking, while Marion is passively being watched.

The discussion about the active male gaze was extended to the slasher, a genre that often presents women being punished and/or killed in point-of-view shots from the perspective of male stalkers, such as the one (above right) from the perspective of young Michael Myers in the opening of John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978). It was argued that men identified with the active male perspective and took sadistic pleasure in watching women being dismembered. In this view, the slasher subgenre was perceived as vicious and misogynistic.

Enter Carol J. Clover, who turned this argument on its head. Clover counters that the "final girl" in many of the classic slashers, such as *Halloween*'s Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis), is a female character that male audiences identify with because she is coded as masculine (a kind of tomboy, such as Caroline Williams as "Stretch" in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*). Men cannot identify with the jocks in these movies because they are always killed off by the stalker. Clover writes in *Men, Women, and Chain Saws* that if "Rambo were to wander out of the action genre into a slasher film, he would end up dead."

For Clover, the slasher was (in the pre-*Buffy* era of the 1980s) the only genre where young men cheered for women who were intelligent, creative, strong and able to survive difficult odds. She believes this identification with the female victim-hero links male spectator responses to masochism rather than sadism. In other words, by identifying with the "final girl," both male and female viewers share in her plight at the hands of the assailant, rather than take pleasure in the pain inflicted upon her. As for that active, "assaultive" gaze of the male stalker, Clover argues that it ends up literally under attack as the "final girl" can often be seen thrusting needles, knives and forks into the eyes of her assailant.

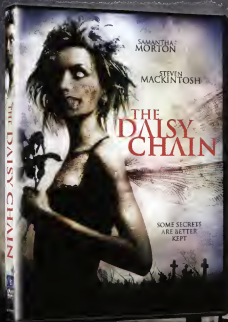
Few academic books have championed "low-end" horror subgenres — such as the slasher or the rape-revenge film — with such insight and political conviction. It is a must-read for anyone serious about the often complex constructions of gender in the post-*Psycho* world of modern horror.

MARIO DEBGLIO-BELLEMAIRE

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